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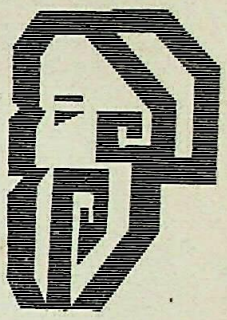

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23rd December 1961

RUPEES SIX ONLY

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INTRODUCTION

Our dedication to Rabindranath Tagore who was the first President of the All India Bengali Literary Conference takes the simple form of a collection of some of the addresses, articles and messages contributed to the thirty-sixth annual session of the conference commencing at Bombay on the 1st January 1961. This session was the first of the series of Tagore Centenary celebrations which are being held all over the world. We tried to arrange an appropriate international curtain-raiser and we acknowledge with gratitude the co-operation extended by the literary organisations and administrations of responsive countries from Japan to the U.S.A. and from Cuba to Russia. Significantly enough, the homage rendered in the Bombay celebrations on such a truly international scale recognised neither the barrier of creeds and languages nor the frontiers of states and nations.

Eminent writers of different Indian languages also joined our celebrations and gave eloquent testimony to Rabindranath's conception of India as one country, one intellectual soil. The infinity of the soul was the soil on which flowered his conception of man and man's portrayal in literature. So the literature Tagore created, the language in which he clothed it, the divine dreams he dreamt transcended the geographical borders of Bengal and the linguistic barrier of Bengali and descended on the whole of India like a body of heavenly light. It had a message as ancient as the Vedic hymns and yet as modern as his latest lyrics. The emotional integration of India, so earnestly sought by us to-day, finds its inspiration in his writings. He had explained that a lotus of a hundred petals could not be made by mincing a hundred flowers. It exists in the radiant dreams of the ordinary rural folk and the sophisticated intellectuals alike as reflected in the India of Tagore's dreams.

This great concept of one geographical entity blossoming into one emotional unity has stood revealed in all its glory in state after state of India in course of the annual sessions of this conference which, in the words of UNESCO, constitutes "always a significant event in the cultural life of India", and "has made notable contributions to the enrichment of the ancient culture of India as well as promotion of understanding among peoples."

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To us all over India Tagore has been not merely an influence but an inspiration. This we have found echoed and re-echoed in the outpourings of Rabindra Sangeet in the shadow of the Marble Rocks of the Narmada, in the silver swell of the backwaters of Kerala with the boatman singing "amar sonar Kerala, ami tomae Bhalobashi"; in the Tagore recitations in the desert sand dunes of Rajasthan; in the sighs of girls with education but without emancipation in the cloistered homes of rural India :

"I am a commonplace girl,
You won't know me"
"Alas, for the commonplace girl,
Alas, for the wastage of God's potential";

in the ardent whisper of Kashmir youths gazing at the golden glimmer of snow suffused with the surface over the Pir Panjal ranges :

"The last sun of the century is sinking in the bloodred clouds of the West and in the whirlwind of hate"
"The crimson glow of light on the horizon is not the light of thy dawn of peace, my motherland."

If an instance from more prominent spheres of life is needed I would recall the life story of a then unknown youth of Mysore who, like many other great Indians, started learning Bengali, so that he could read Gitanjali in original. With a mind enriched with idealism and nationalism he became a great patriot and litterateur, a statesman, minister and governor. More than exhaustive quotations and elaborate researches in the texts, trends and tests of Indian literatures these bring home to us what Rabindranath has meant and will continue to mean to us and our literatures.

Many anonymous instances can be recalled. During the Japanese invasion of and the disastrous evacuation from Burma fleeing crowds of educated prosperous people, originally belonging to different Indian provinces, took to the forbidding and often fatal trek to India through the 'green hell'. Many people gratefully revealed to me the great solace and sustenance recitations from Tagore had given them during the journey. I recall the story of the French poet, Comptess de Nouilles, and the celebrated French Premier, M. Clemenceau, who sought refuge in the songs of Gitanjali when the First World War was declared

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and France instinctively felt where she stood. I also remember the note book of the young English poet Wilfred Owen who was shelled to death on the very Armistice Day in 1918 when he had copied in his notebook some consoling lines from Rabindranath.

To turn to life from death. Said Andre Gide, another Nobel Laureate, "to me his poetry is the testament of a great visionary who looked at life with serenity .... His poems are echoes from a distant world, caressing our ears that have grown tired (almost to the point of deafness) of the tumult of our violent age ...." The image of Tagore abroad did not remain long as an intellectual curiosity. Thinkers abroad quickly realised that Tagore was the greatest figure in the mission of bringing together the East and the West which is the most dramatic and perhaps the most important event of this century.

Equally to us in the East and to the receptive minds like that of Count Keyserling in the West, Tagore has meant "much, immeasurably much"..... He was a creator.... who first sang the forests and the stars whereby they came into being." As the tribute paid by the University of Oxford put it, he was "the myriad-minded poet and writer, the musician famous in his art, the philosopher proved in both word and deed, the fervent upholder of learning and sound doctrine, the ardent defender of public liberties, one who by the sanctity of his life and character has won for himself the praise of all mankind." The addresses of the distinguished writers here being home to us clearly that it was not only the elements of mysticism and spiritualism that made his writings immortal. A much greater basis for immortality lies here : the efflorescence of a perfect man who translated into imperishable forms the universal aspirations of the soul towards beauty. The great author of Great Hunger, Johann Bojer, said that Tagore is India; he has brought to the world a new heavenly symbol, the lotus.

In the pages that follow we look upon that lotus, a flower with a hundred petals as Sanskrit poets call it, that beacons us to the sun of life, the Rabi.

Debesh Das

All India Bengali Literary Conference,
Kali Bari, New Delhi.

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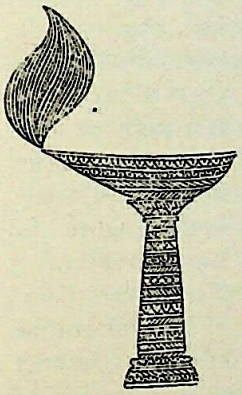
Jawaharlal Nehru

TAGORE AND OUR TIMES

This year, 1961, which begins today is going to be devoted in a good measure to the celebrations of the centenary of Rabindranath Tagore. And this function today, this conference, is the beginning of those celebrations, and a fitting beginning that this literary conference should start these functions all over India, and, indeed, outside India. I do not know how those who think about Tagore, and those who are assembled here, how they look upon him. Of course, as a great literary figure, a great singer and a great man, and more especially at this literary conference, he will be considered as a very great writer. I have read Tagore, unfortunately in translations, myself, not in Bengali. But the translations, some of them made by himself are powerful enough. But as I stand here before you, two or three types of thoughts fill my mind, rather personal thoughts, of the impression of influence that he had made on people of my generation, on me.



Not being directly involved in politics, he was not a person whose name appeared daily in newspapers, in the headlines

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of newspapers. But the tremendous impact of Tagore, his writings and himself during many decades of India's life is, I think, something that perhaps many people do not appreciate or understand outside Bengal. In Bengal, of course, his writings, his songs, spread all over the countryside because he had the supreme virtue of being a great writer and yet a writer the villager could understand. He was not something remote and the language he used was not something remote as it is very apt to be often in our Indian languages, some of them. Today, a writer thinks that if he is to be a big writer, he has to use big language, big sentences and big phrases and everything big—which deadens the language and takes out all the beauty from it. Or a person produces words which only he and his intimates can understand, nobody else can understand. That is the fate of some of our languages, especially Hindi today. But the Bengali that Rabindranath used was beautiful and within the reach of the humblest person. And so, through his language, through his songs, he influenced Bengal greatly, and through the translations of his works he influenced others.

But what I was thinking of was not so much his works—his dramas and poetry, although it is through that that he influenced people, but rather the entire personality. How people in India, of my generation I repeat, grew up under the influence of this radiating personality—not perhaps even conscious of it so much, but, nevertheless, rather enveloped by it, sometimes coming in contact with it more consciously. That was my own experience. Rabindranath Tagore did not come to me as some sudden blast. I can hardly remember the first time or the second time or the third time that I met him ; I do remember vaguely I went there. And, of course, at that time I myself was under another tremendous impact, that was Gandhiji's. So, I have no clear recollection of his first powerful impact. But then, gradually, I myself was surprised to see how his thoughts and his writings and his self was, to some extent, of course, moulding us, moulding me and my generation.

It was a generation of two mighty men, Tagore and Gandhi, in India ; very different and yet with similar boots—

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in a sense, in many ways different and similar. And these two moulded India. I was very much more closely in contact with Gandhiji and he affected me tremendously. And yet, if I may say so in all humility, my mind was a little more in tune with Tagore although all my activities have been conditioned by Gandhiji. There was no conflict, of course, between the two and as I grew and as I saw more of Rabindranath, I was attracted to him more and more. Attracted, and at the same time, I noticed, as I noticed in the case of Gandhiji, too, what these two mighty men were constantly undergoing. They were men, full of humanity, full of life, full of song—at least Tagore obviously was, full of the joy of life. And yet his life became, because of his extreme sensitiveness, also a pain and torture. The things that he saw and felt, going on not only round about him but in the world. His last message—I think it was last message —on the eve of his 80th birthday and a little before he died—was a message which came to me (I was in prison then). I read it then and one could hear almost the agonised cry of a tortured soul, in that message. How deeply he had been moved by what was happening in the world then. That was the time of the war, the Second World War, and it sounded almost prophetic what he said there and one saw this man who had written such thing of beauty, full of life, suffering this intense agony. For whom? Not for Bengal, not even for India, but for humanity. He put himself on that sort of level and felt all these pangs.

And then I wondered, later, and I wondered even today as I was coming here and thinking of this—what he would have said of the world today. I felt that message of his on the eve of his 80th birthday was equally applicable today with almost a few words changed here and there, it would have fitted in with the conflicts and the torture of humanity today —and at the same time the frivolity of humanity. Here I use frivolity not in a bad sense, but still it does become bad when in the face of disaster and everything a person is trivial and frivolous and not sees what is happening to the left and to the right, and not cares either for it. And so, that message of his rings in our ears and brings out the man, the very

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depths of not only of his accomplishments, but the depth of his heart from where it came. And if we are to understand him we must know something of this agony through which he passed, sharing the agony of the world.

What are we to do about it? Read his poems, sing his songs and enjoy them? Certainly. What else, for he is something more than all that—more than a beautiful singer and a great writer. How are we, then, to be worthy of him, who influenced us and shaped the whole generation in India, to a certain extent? I do not know. But looking at the picture round about, whether it is the world or India—the world is perhaps too big, we think we react to things happening. For the moment, I am talking about the people in India, and we are inevitably drawn into this drama of the world or melodrama—call it what you like—but naturally our concern is India more; a big enough concern. And we rejoice at many things that we see happening in India, the growth of a great people. But at the same time, sorrow grips us because of the narrowness of people, because of the pettiness of people, because of the divisions of people, and people living in their own little shells and forgetting the larger unity, the larger co-operative effort. Here we live at a moment which should fill our country with excitement; to have the privilege of living at a time when one fights the good fight in a big way.

To some extent, some of us had that privilege in an earlier generation when we fought the good fight of independence, and fought it with vigour, fought it without rancour. An unusual thing in such struggle; but such was the quality of our Leader, Gandhiji, that he made us small folk somewhat bigger than we were. And so we grew up in that generation, and that generation succeeded in gaining independence under the influence of Gandhi and Tagore and other great leaders. Looking round now, I see, somehow, a lack of that feeling. There are many good things happening in India, but I do feel a lack of that spirit which filled our generation—the spirit of adventure, the spirit of daring, the spirit of joining in a great cause, the spirit of linking ourselves to a mighty chariot, to a mighty cause, not

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caring for yourself, and thereby getting the greatest joy in life that one could have. There is no greater joy than being associated with something great outside yourself, and not thinking of your petty self and your petty worries all the time. We experienced that and therein we were most fortunate, my generation.

Well, I suppose it is difficult for me to think or to understand what the feelings are of the present, well, of the much younger people today. It is exceedingly difficult for one generation to think, to put itself in the place of the next generation. And I am old enough to be separated by a good many years from succeeding generations. So I cannot easily put myself in their place, may be that I cannot fully grasp what they really feel. Certainly it is a good generation, the present generation; I am not criticising it. It is a good one in many ways—also, with somethings missing. At least I miss them. That is the spirit which made our great movement for independence in India a great movement in spite of our petty selves. It was that spirit of not caring for oneself; caring for the cause and caring for it always in the right way because we were being pulled up by Gandhiji for every lapse, pulled up if we were discourteous to the person we called the enemy whom we were fighting. We had to give courtesy even to him. Now all that seems rather the distant past and here in this great country of India, with all kinds of pushes and pulls, with a multitude of people, enormous multitudes of people, living here with great things happening, with the whole of India changing in a revolutionary way, masses of people changing, with new generations coming, with the women of India coming into their own—all kinds of revolutionary things happening, I feel excited, excited by that, even at my age. I do not see that excitement often reflected in others' eyes who are much younger. They take things for granted; and among the things they take for granted is grumbling about things in general. Well, I suppose that is inevitable, but to my own heart and mind, a vague feeling of sadness comes over me, that at this great moment in India's history, its life and work, I was a young man again to live through these great things and take part

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in them as a young man should. I work, and may be for a few years, I work on with some strength and vigour. But naturally, there is a difference in the manner one works, at this time of his life as mine, and with that fierce energy that youth should show. Where is that fierce energy? Today, I look for it because this is just the time we should have it, associated with those other great virtues which in their respective spheres, Gandhi and Tagore stood for. We tend to become a querulous people, a complaining people, both a self-satisfied people and a dissatisfied people, at the same time. Our discussions, the questions that come before us, are of the small things of life, are of the things that separate and not that bring together. And so we lose the longer vision that attracted us and pulled us—the vision that Tagore and Gandhi gave us.

And so if we think of Tagore, let us think of him in many ways, but above all let us think of him as a man with that great vision, a man greatly above ourselves, and yet one with the lowest as Gandhi was, who was a golden link to bring together various types of people in their common humanity and joining them, linking them. It is that thing that we want most of all in India, with our petty differences today and controversies, and our being wrapped up in ourselves in something small. Because the call of Today, whether it is in India or the world, is of the larger vision, the larger humanity for which Tagore stood. We see the most amazing advances in science and technology and we are duly impressed and then suddenly we come up against smallness of spirit, the complete lack of vision and the idea that we are going to advance by kicking others or mounting on their shoulders, not hand in hand. 'So this whole outlook becomes one of conflict, of hatred, of violence; and whether we succeed or not almost becomes immaterial. Because we have fundamentally failed, that is our outlook. What happened, where do we go to with that outlook of smallness and pettiness and hatred? It is in that sense that this amalgam of ideas come to me when I think of Tagore, or when I think of Gandhi—the two men to whom I owe so much. And I wonder if it is possible, how far it is possible, for us to repay

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in a small measure, all of us, repay in a small measure this great debt that we owe them, to keep even in our unworthy hands the legacy they gave and try to maintain its rightness to some extent. Anyhow, it is there, the legacy, whether we fail it or not. And it will remain there for ages and the understanding men of the understanding generation, or people, will profit by it, here as elsewhere. It is good that we meet in this Centenary year and offer our homage and give our thought not only to the beauty of what he has wrought in the field of song and writing, but to that magnificent vision of his. May we succeed in some measure !

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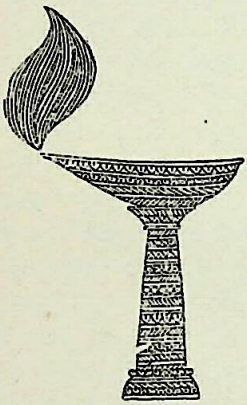
Sudhi Ranjan Das

THE LEGACY OF RABINDRANATH

Obeisance

After having accepted the invitation to preside over this momentous session of the All-India Bengali Literary Conference I found myself immediately faced with a problem regarding the choice of the subject on which I should dilate in my address. I felt a little perplexed. It is, I apprehend, usual for the President of an ordinary session of a literary conference to touch upon some special aspects of the particular literature with which the conference is concerned. But due to my imperfect knowledge of the Bengali literature and for that matter of any other literature I felt I was not competent to hold a learned discourse on any particular aspect of literature or initiate a discussion on various problems of literature. However, turning the problem in my mind I came to realise that the time and place of the present session of the Conference had been so arranged as to synchronise with the inauguration of the celebration of the Birth Centenary of Gurudeva Rabindranath Tagore organised by the State of Maharashtra. Indeed, this annual



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session of the All-India Bengali Literary Conference has been chosen as the first programme for the observance of the Centenary in India and constitutes, so to say, the curtain-raiser to the celebrations that will follow during the rest of the year throughout the country. So I decided to say a few words about one or two of the many significant lines of thought which I have noticed in Rabindra-literature and which have left an indelible impression on my untutored mind by the sublime beauty, grace and grandeur of the Master's creation. By speaking about Rabindranath and his literary and other contributions I shall, I hope, be fulfilling my dual role, first of discharging my primary duty as the President of the thirtysixth annual session of the All-India Bengali Literary Conference by touching upon the fringe of the Bengali literature and then by discharging my part of the duty connected with the Centenary Celebrations by offering, in company with you all, my sincere homage and fealty to the sacred memory of Gurudeva at whose feet I had the privilege, in my boyhood days, to sit and learn my lessons, and to receive his daily benedictons.

In order to adequately appreciate the merit and excellence of Rabindra-literature it is, I consider, imperative that the reader should have a fairly clear notion of the environments in which he was born and brought up. In some of his writings depicting the early years of his life the Poet himself has recorded his own impressions of the surroundings which moulded his character and broadened his outlook on life. Many of you may have read those writings in original or in translation and therefore, it will not be necessary for me to refer to them in detail.

Ancestral home

The Poet's ancestral dwelling house was situated at Jorasanko, then the northernmost part of the town of Calcutta, which, in those days, was but a quiet suburb not very thickly populated. It was a big and rambling house of the old type with a guardroom at the front entrance. There were several spacious courtyards one after another surrounded by rooms, the first one of which faced the *thakur*

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dalan where daily worship of the family idols and the periodical worship of other important deities used to be performed. There was a garden in front of the house and also a garden in the inner portion of the compound with a good-sized tank with coconut, banyan, peepul and other trees on its banks. At that time the city was not half as big as it has grown now and there were not many neighbouring houses to block the azure sky. From the windows of the main buildings one could watch the green and shining foliage on the top of the trees gently waving in the cool southern breeze and one could, at noontide, hear the shrill screeching of a country eagle disturbing the midday silence of a hot summer day.

After the passing away of Dwarkanath Tagore, the grandfather of the Poet, there was a distinct turn of fortune for the worse for his descendants brought about by sheer extravagance indulged in by him and which gave him the honorific title of 'Prince.' Gone were the pomp and pageantry in which the Prince revelled, leaving only the huge pile of a palace which was his dwelling house at Jorasanko, some remnants of odd pieces of dusty antique furniture serving as relics of the bygone days of glorious affluence and a very truncated landed estate consisting of a few scattered *patni talukas* and *touzis* near or abutting on the river Padma in East Bengal. Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, the son of the Prince, had to face the realities of what must have appeared to many as a very hard life for a scion of an erstwhile rich family rolling in wealth.

Significant changes

Along with the cataclysmic change in earthly fortune there came other significant changes in the Tagore house of Jorasanko. The Maharshi was an ardent follower of Raja Ram Mohun Roy and openly accepted initiation into Brahmoism, abjured idolatry and became the protagonist and leader of a reorientated faith founded on the pure monotheism of the ancient Upanishads. Through the teachings of the Upanishads Maharshi Devendranath Tagore established a close affinity with the pre-Puranic Indian

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culture. Every morning his sons had to recite, with correct pronunciation and accent, the sublime verses culled from the Vedas and the Upanishads and included in a compilation published later on under the title of *Brahmo Dharma.* It is needless to say that the daily recital of these beautiful and morally uplifting verses from the ancient Indian scriptures and the simple and solemn procedure of the prayer meetings devised by the Maharshi influenced the minds of all his children including the Poet who was the youngest of them all. As a result of this change in the moral and religious outlook of Maharashi Devendranath Tagore, he and his family had drifted away from the orthodox Bengali society and became the nucleus of an enlightened society drawing perennial inspiration from the Upanishads. The quiet seclusion of the highly religious atmosphere thus pervading the Tagore house at Jorasanko, the lofty moral influence of the Maharshi and his fearless strength of character imperceptibly but surely made a lasting impression on the mental make-up of the members of his family and stamped on them a very definitely distinctive character. In the dresses those young men and women wore, in their behaviour and conduct and in the language they spoke one could perceive that they were different from the ordinary run of men and women.

At that time in most, if not all, of the educated families of Bengal, the Bengali language was relegated to the inner apartments to be used by the womenfolk and the maid-servants. This practice, however, did not enter the portals of the Tagore house at Jorasanko. There was a great veneration and attachment for the Bengali language in the boys and girls of this branch of the Tagore family who used this language on all occasions and for all purposes. This does not mean that they undervalued the beauty and vigour of the English language and literature. The atmosphere of the Jorasanko house was kept reverberating by recitations from the plays of Shakespeare and from the writings of other English authors of note. Political aspirations for the freedom of the country had not then taken a definite and concrete shape in the minds of the younger generation of

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people. Only occasionally one could hear Rangalal and, after him, Hemchandra singing songs of freedom like two lonely morning birds. The spirit of political awakening was, however, in the air and it pervaded the minds of the youths of this family and some enthusiastic men who used to be frequent visitors to the Tagore house at Jorasanko. Under the leadership of Nabagopal Mitra who was their friend, the scions of this family started in the compound of the family dwelling house the Hindu Mela for giving an impetus to the revival of the indigenous arts and crafts of Bengal. Dwijendranath, Satyendranath and Jyotirindranath, three of the elder brothers of the Poet, composed inspiring swadeshi songs which were sung at the Mela. Jyotirindranath, who was a versatile man of genius, started a secret society for the emancipation of the country and the veteran Rajnarain Bose, another ardent admirer and follower of the Maharshi, was the high priest of that project. In short, the Tagore family reflected the light of culture of this ancient land and the hopes and aspirations of the younger people of a new generation.

Birth of Rabindranath

It was at this auspicious moment when the dawn of a new day was just beginning to break, dispelling the gloom of the preceding dark and dismal night, mildly reverberating the stillness of the lying-in room in the Jorasanko Tagore house, that the twentyfifth of Vaisakh of the Bengali year 1268 quietly announced the advent of the youngest child of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore. The child was born in the bosom of a family which was saturated with the noble and elevating inspiration of the lofty messages of the Vedas and the Upanishads, and was deeply attached to the language and the cultural heritages of this ancient land. He was brought up under the highly spiritual influence of his revered father and under the fostering care of his affectionate elder brothers, particularly of Jyotirindranath, in an atmosphere of chaste elegance, innate good behaviour and aesthetic taste. It is essential that we should constantly bear in mind this background of the environment in which this child of destiny

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first opened his eyes and from which he drew moral and spiritual sustenance in later life so that we may profitably study and appreciate the beauty and the ennobling message of the writings of the great poet and thinker whose Birth Centenary our Prime Minister has just inaugurated.

I must confess that I have not bestowed any sustained application of my mind on the works of Rabindranath which is absolutely necessary for a profitable study of Rabindra-literature and, therefore, I dare not launch upon a critical discussion of the merit of his writings—poetry or prose. I shall only make a few general observations as to some of the broader aspects of his literary genius which have struck me. I think it can be asserted, without any fear of contradiction, that there is no branch of the Bengali literature which has not been enriched by his vigorous contributions. Take first his poetical works. His poetical urge came when he was but a child. Just as a tiny hill-stream gushes out of a hidden crevice in the icebound mountain and joyfully springs from boulder to boulder forming beautiful water-falls, gathering volume and strength from other rivulets that join it on its way and travels a long distance skirting the edges of many villages and cities, fertilising the lands on both sides of its banks and eventually loses itself into the mighty ocean, Rabindranath's poetry also gushed out of the rich exuberance of his emotional mind and his aesthetic impulse, found perennial inspiration from the cultural heritage of this ancient land, became enriched by the self-expressions of the poets of many foreign lands and eventually mingled itself with the fathomless depth of the Supreme Soul. It is impossible for me to make a complete assessment of the priceless contributions that Rabindranath has made to the Bengali literature and to the fulfilment of the hopes and aspirations of the millions of men and women inhabiting distant countries in the world. For the sweetness of his language, the measured cadence of his diction, the richness of the imageries conceived by him and the wealth of the noble thoughts pervading his poetical works Rabindranath stands apart as a class by himself. Who has not been overwhelmed by the enchanting brilliance of the language and

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theme of his famous poems, too numerous to enumerate?

Celestial beauty

Who has not been struck dumb by the lofty flight of imagination and the poetic conception of the celestial beauty manifesting itself in rhythm and vibrating throughout the universe? Just to quote a stanza from 'Urvasi':

"When thou dancest in the assembled hall of the gods,
exuberant with joy,
O swaying, billowy Urvasi!
To measured music dance the lined waves of the sea
Shivering to the ears of corn trembles the skirt of the
earth;
From the chainlet on the breast bursts the star that falls
on the floor of the sky;
Suddenly in the breast of man the mind loses itself
The stream of blood dances in his veins.
On the distant horizon of a sudden snaps thy girdle,
O thou without restraint!"

Image of Bengal

I do not remember to have come across anywhere such a robust, grand, noble and enthralling conception of Beauty, eternal and all-pervading, which has found expression in the above few lines. Read his 'Sarat' (Ode to Autumn):

"How sweet thou lookest on this autumn morn, Bengal,
O Mother mine!
In stainless beauty shines before mine eyes
Thy dusky form divine.
Thy rivers scarce can bear their liquid load,
Nor fields contain their corn,
The *koel* and the *doel's* dulcet call
Resounds throughout thy sylvan audience hall.
And in the midst thou standest, Mother mine
On this fair autumn morn.
The Mother's garland of sweet *shefali*
Scents all the earth and air,
Her garment's hem is trimmed with rainspent clouds,
So creamy white and fair.

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She wears a lovely diadem golden rayed,
In green and golden glory she's arrayed,
with flower-woven anklets on her feet
My Mother standeth like a picture sweet
with dew and flowers and corn and laughing light.
The earth's a gladsome sight."

What a brilliant image of Mother Bengal arises in front of our mind's eye resplendent with the glory of a glittering autumn morning when we read through the enchanting stanzas of this poetic phantasy! Do I not remember how in our childhood days we used to pore over the stories in poems collected in *Katha O Kahini* until we could see the character coming out of the stories and playing upon the stage of our imaginative minds? Can anything surpass the pathos of 'Dui Bigha Jami', 'Debatar Gras' or 'Puratan Bhritya', to mention only a few? The two to three thousand songs that he wrote and set to music which are collected in *Naivedya, Gitanjali, Gitimalya,* and other books of songs would alone have made him immortal, even if he had written nothing else. Each of these songs is an unblemished pearl with the effulgence of its pure thoughts and musical diction. The rousing and soul-stirring swadeshi songs that he wrote during the anti-partition movement in Bengal in the beginning of this century, e.g., 'Amar sonar Bangla', 'Yadi tor dak suney keu na asey', 'Banglar mati', 'Mayer dewa mota kapad', can still be heard in all parts of Bengal. His composition 'Jana-gana-mana-adhinayaka' has been adopted as our National Anthem and its rich but simple tune is world famous today.

If the reader bestows a little close attention he will easily discern that several characteristic lines of thought have found expression in Rabindranath's poems and songs. Just as a string passing through the hearts of the flowers sustains a pretty garland, so do these thought-rays passing through the core of many of his poems and songs make up a beautiful wreath. A competent critic may write a volume on each of these thought-rays but as I am neither a littérateur nor a literary critic it will be an act of supererogation on my part

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to attempt to do so, especially within the limited space of a presidential address. I shall, therefore, content myself with referring to one or two of those aspects of Rabindra-literature.

Stream of life

The first idea that finds an exquisite expression in Tagore's lyric poems and songs is that of an unceasing stream of life that has been continuously flowing along since the birth of the earth. Humanity is floating along that endless stream through different ages and stretching its arms in search of perfection. Nobody can tell when began this eternal quest of the human soul for the attainment of self-realisation. There is no rest in the course of this journey and nobody can tell when it will end. Said the Poet—

"I know not when I set forth
with your song in my lips.
That is not today
that was long, long ago.
I remember no more
how long have I yearned after you.
That is not today
that was long, long ago.
As the stream rushes forth
unmindful of its goal,
even so have I coursed through
the stream of life.
That is not today
that was long, long ago."

The same theme finds expression also in the following lines :

"Since that immemorial time
when you set me afloat
in the stream of life
you have left for me
many a thrill of sudden joy
in many a home and many a path
I know this in my heart, my beloved, I know.

* * *

No one knows how through the ages

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many a joy and many a sorrow,
many a love and many a song,
have filled this heart of mine
with the nectar of life everlasting
I know this in my heart, my beloved, I know."

The same idea of the ceaseless journey through eternity of man infused with new and ever-lasting life by the tender care of the Supreme Being will also be found in the following two exquisite stanzas:

"Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure
This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again and fillest it ever with fresh life.
This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new."

It is not necessary to multiply instances. It is not my purpose to say that this idea of the gradual evolution of man from birth to birth through the ages and in course of his endless journey towards the attainment of his goal was discovered by Rabindranath for the first time, but I do desire to emphasise that Rabindranath did give a new orientation to this sublime idea expressed in inimitable language and that I hold, is undoubtedly a special contribution of Rabindranath which has enriched our Bengali literature.

Eternal quest

Side by side with this idea of the eternal quest of man towards perfection, we find a parallel line of thought which brings to us the reassuring comfort that it is not man alone who is out on eternal quest for meeting the Lord but that the Lord Himself is constantly coming down from His high heaven all through the ages to reveal Himself to mankind and to surrender Himself to His Own creation. He who has faith in his heart, can read the signs and knows how to listen, can hear the measured footsteps of the Lord. Mira Bai had that devoted intuition when she sang:

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"I hear the sound of my Lord's footsteps."

So had Rabindranath, and he asked:

"Have you not heard his silent steps?
He comes, comes, ever comes.

Every moment and every age, every day and every night
he comes, comes, ever comes.
In the fragrant days of sunny April
through the forest path
He comes, comes, ever comes.

In the rainy gloom of July nights
on the thundering chariot of clouds
He comes, comes, ever comes."

Thus comes the Lord through eternity. He has been coming nearer and nearer to me ever since this earth was born. He has not waited for my call but has been coming to meet me out of the abundance and fullness of His Own love and affection for me. He has been secretly sending His messages to me through millions of His silent emissaries and nothing can cover up or conceal His manifestation. So declared the Poet:

"I know not from what distant time thou art
ever coming nearer to meet me. Thy sun and stars
can never keep thee hidden from me for aye.

"In many a morning and eve thy foosteps have been
heard and thy messenger has come within my heart
and called me in secret."

Although He is the King of kings yet descending from His high altar He has come and stood right in front of my lonely dwelling house:

"You came down from your throne and
stood at my cottage door."

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But why is this solicitude of the Lord for the mere man? The Poet answers:

"Thus it is thy joy in me is so full.
Thus it is that thou hast come down to me.
O thou Lord of all heavens, where would be
thy love if I were not?

And for this, thou who art the King of kings hast
decked thyself in beauty
to captivate my heart. And for this thy
love loses itself in the love of thy lover,
and there art thou seen in the perfect union of two."

It is to celebrate this grand communion of the human soul with the Eternal Soul that the sky has been flooded with celestial light and it is to witness this union that night keeps vigil with the world in her lap. So sang the Poet—

"Because you and I shall meet
The Heavens are full of light;

Because you and I shall meet
The world is full of greenery.

Because you and I shall meet
The night is awake with the world in her arms;
And the dawn opens the door of the east
with a burst of song."

Union with the Lord

And when the union does take place and man feels His embrace, then there remains no obstacle separating him from the Beloved:

"When you and I mingle
All becomes manifest;

The sea of the universe
Swings in swelling waves."

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It is in the ecstacy of such union that man speaks from the depth of his heart:

"My beloved is ever in my heart
That is why I see him everywhere,

He is in the pupils of my eyes
That is why I see him everywhere."

It is thus that the realisation comes:

"I go seeking him
who is all the while
in my heart.

Because he is there
stars burst forth
all over the sky
and flowers bloom
in my woodlands
of a morning.

Because he is there
in the light of my eyes,
there is such play of form
such complex of colours
in the infinite of black and white.

Because he is there
with me all the while
the southern breeze
sends thrills of joy
all over my body."

The Poet has described the joy of such communion in two simple lines:

"And now I have gained communion
with you, O Beautiful One—
Blessed is my body
and blessed is my soul."

Then man wants to dedicate himself to the Beloved

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and tries to wake Him up by gently singing to Him in the *Behag* tune:

"The night is dark and your slumber
is deep in the hush of my being.
Wake, O Pain of Love, for I know not
how to open the door, and I stand outside."

When the well-beloved wakes up, man asks the inevitable question:

"Soul of my Soul;
has all your yearnings ceased
now that you indwell my soul?"

I do not claim that this eternal quest of man for his Lord, this constant coming of the Lord to meet His creature, this dedication of man to his God are ideas propagated by Rabindranath for the first time. These are part and parcel of our cultural heritage. But there can be no gainsaying the fact that these eternal ideas have found a beautiful expression in the poems and songs of Rabindranath. I have no doubt that those who revel in poetic imagination, whose curiosity is fresh and pulsating with life will find much pleasure in picking out and analysing many such thought-rays in Rabindra-literature. I leave it there and pass on.

Musical operas

The literary genius of Rabindranath was not confined only to the writing of lyric poems and songs. His *Valmiki Pratibha* and *Mayar Khela* were perhaps the earliest modern examples of musical operas in any Indian language. As typical examples of drama may be cited, *Malini* in rhymed verse and *Visarjan* in blank verse. Both of them are exquisite in their content and composition. Amongst his prose plays you may regale yourself for hours with *Raja O Rani, Prayaschitta, Sarodotsava, Achalayatan, Raja, Dakghar,* and several other plays. I make bold to say that you will not find an equal to any of his several dance dramas—*Natir Puja, Chitrangada* and *Shyama*—each of which is an un-

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rivalled piece of poetry, music and art rolled into one. He did not leave untouched humourous comedies. His *Vaikunther Khata, Chirakumar Sabha, Hasya Kautuk, Byanga Kautuk* and *Goday Galad* will ever remain green and sources of hearty enjoyment overflowing with the chaste humour of the choicest and most delightful dialogues. Rabindranath was the king of short story writers in Bengali and was the pioneer in that line of literature in the whole of India. Every one of the short stories collected in the three volumes of *Galpaguchchha* is a gem of the purest ray serene. Each one depicts in minute details, the picture of the joys and sorrows of the daily life of the simple men and women dwelling in the cities and in the remote villages in the interior of Bengal. 'Kabuliwalla' and 'Kshudhita Pashan' will remain things of joy for ever. One has to read his short stories to realise how through their medium Rabindranath tried to eradicate the social inequalities and vices by holding them up to ridicule and rebuke. Amongst his novels mention must be made of *Nauka Dubi, Chokher Bali, Gora, Gharey Bairey, Sesher Kavita,* and *Char Adhyaya.* Each of them is an excellent example of incisive analysis of the minds and the changing moods of the characters of the stories. Each is rich with the wealth of description of the beautiful rivers and the colourful meadows and paddy fields of the countryside of Bengal and with the chaste dialogues. The stories never drag but pulsate with life and emotion as they proceed from chapter to chapter. I remember how eagerly we, and for that matter, our elders used to look forward to the arrival of the current month's issue of the *Prabasi* containing a fresh chapter or two of *Gora* that was being published serially in that magazine. It will not be an over-statement to describe each of these novels as a piece of real diamond.

Tagore's prose writings

My account will remain incomplete if I do not refer to Rabindranath's prose writings which had a wide sweep in the variety of topics covered by them. This takes us back to his early age and particularly to the time when he was

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discharging his duties as Editor of two celebrated monthly magazines. *Bangadarsan* which had been started by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the author of the immortal 'Bande Mataram' song, was in a moribund state, if not completely dead. Rabindranath resuscitated that magazine and personally took up the responsibilities of the Editor. There was also the *Bharati,* the well-known monthly magazine started by his talented eldest sister Swarnakumari Devi, which also Rabindranath had to edit at a later stage. As Editor he had to collect articles from well-known littérateurs and thinkers which was not by any means an easy task. Mostly he had to write articles himself. One cannot but admire the originality of his thoughts and the fascinating language in which he expressed them. His literary criticisms and in particular his warm appreciations of the writings of Kalidasa and other old masters are models of sober reviews for the depth of the knowledge and insight into human psychology disclosed therein and the pointed language in which they are written. He was a great protagonist of popularising our folklore and folk-songs. His essays on education will give us a clear idea of the lines on which, he felt, education should be imparted to young students. Those essays will show that he was very strongly impressed with the simplicity and usefulness of the kind of education and training that the young disciples used to receive from their gurus living in humble hermitages in the ancient *tapovanas.* He started a *Brahmacharyasram* on that line at Santiniketan which has now blossomed forth as the Visva-Bharati.

Over fifty years ago when, except a few thinkers like the late Bhudev Mukherjee and Akshoy Sarkar, nobody ever thought of the poverty and squalor, moral and material, in which the illiterate villagers were wallowing, Rabindranath was writing article after article on village reconstruction and the desirability and imperative necessity of co-operative enterprises. He had personal contacts with the villagers when he was put in charge of the management of his ancestral estate by his father and acquired at first hand an intimate knowledge of their problems. In his numerous

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essays written half a century ago he suggested solutions which later on he tried to put to a test in Sriniketan where with the help and active co-operation of a few ardent colleagues like Leonard Elmhirst and Kalimohan Ghose he started reconstruction work in the neighbouring villages. In short, there is no problem affecting the physical, social, economic, and educational well-being of the villagers on which he had not applied his mind and in respect of which he had not made valuable suggestions for the amelioration of their condition. Happily our Government has in right earnest taken up and is implementing the suggestions made by him over fifty years ago.

Invaluable legacy

The legacy that Rabindranath has left for us in the field of literature and social reconstruction is unquestionably unique and invaluable. He has, in addition to that, left a priceless heritage for the world—his message of universalism. When the warring nations of the earth, intoxicated with narrow nationalism, were arming to the teeth with a view to flying at each other's throats and gain the mastery over the entire globe, standing like a statue of solid rock with a torch of heavenly light this savant of India, then a dependent country, sent out, at that critical juncture in the history of the world and its civilisation, his message of peace and amity in an unfaltering and firm voice. His ever-expanding mind nurtured on the sublime ideals of the Upanishads realised in the innermost recesses of his heart the brotherhood of men who were *Amritasya putrah*—the sons of the Immortal. He felt that men of different nations must come to know each other and realise the inner unity of mankind. To achieve this lofty purpose he conceived and established his Visva-Bharati whose motto is *Yatra visvam bhabatyekanidam*—where the world makes its home in one nest. His passionate hope and aspiration were that at the sacred *Asrama* founded by his illustrious father the world will find that one nest. This message of universalism is, I apprehend, Rabindranath's greatest gift to the world.

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Service to humanity

This great and remarkable man with a master mind, the manifold qualities of whose head and heart I have discussed above has rendered endless service to humanity in diverse ways. He has made priceless contributions to the Bengali language and literature. His literary creations have stimulated our sense of beauty with their graceful purity and have inspired our souls with the ecstasy of the divine love. By his fearlessness he has shed lustre on our motherland. The letter which he wrote to the then Viceroy of India protesting against the callous and brutal massacre at Jallianwallabagh breathes, in every one of its lines, an emphatic protest, emanating from the deepest recesses of his lacerated heart against the arrogance of the minions of an irresponsible government and in silent sympathy with the sufferings of his mute countrymen. He was certainly one of the few great sons of India to whom we are indebted for the high place that India has attained in the councils of the world. Truly did Will Durant write—"You alone are sufficient reason why India shall be free." A century has gone past since he was born and the time has come for us to acknowledge our indebtedness to him. That is why we have assembled here in this conference to pay our respectful homage to his sacred memory. In doing so we must constantly bear in mind what he stood for steadfastly and fearlessly. He toiled night and day not only to cater to our aesthetic sense but to uplift us from the utter degradation of moral decay arising out of a sense of sheer frustration. He felt for the ignorant and poor villagers in our own country as well as for all down-trodden people in other parts of the earth—in fact for all the poorest, lowliest and the lost. He discussed and suggested remedies for many social, educational and economic evils which he found sapping the vitality of the nation. He was not only a poet and a visionary but was a sound practical man with a genuinely broad outlook. Our offerings of gratitude and affection on this auspicious day marking the Centenary of the birth of that Universal Man will be true and sincere and will please his departed soul only if we purify our hearts, practise what

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he preached and reflect the radiant glory, the moral purity of the lofty ideals in our respective lives. Let us bend our energies and bring about the fulfilment of his earnest endeavour to uplift the masses and to make this ancient land a fit place for self-respecting men and women to live in.

Sublime prayer

Let us, therefore, earnestly join him in his sublime prayer and supplicate to the Almighty in his own words:

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever widening thought and action—
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake."

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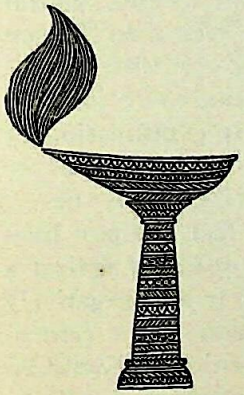
Humayun Kabir

TAGORE THE EDUCATOR

Tagore was essentially a poet but it is not enough to say that he was a poet. In sheer quantity and quality of his writings, he has very few equals in the world. Number of lyrics, can be probably 2000 or more, number of songs ranging between 2000 and 3000 and the quality compares with the highest that has been attained by man, anywhere in the world at any time. Comparatively late in life he took to painting and within a space of 10 to 15 years, he painted some 3000 pictures and many competent critics hold, that in a sense, that is the beginning of the real modern movement of painting in India. In any case it is beyond question that some of these paintings are of very great distinction. As a poet, as a musician, as one who thought about social problems, one who thought on religion, one who thought on politics and not only thought on all these topics but also he gave concrete ideas and concrete programmes. For true to his vocation as a poet, whatever he saw, he saw in the concrete. He saw as a visible embodiment, saw not merely as an abstract



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formulation but in terms of concrete realisation in practice. With Tagore there was never any difference between theory and practice. What was theory intellectually, was given body and shape by his imagination and given a reality through his practice.

From that point of view again I think it is proper that the series of discussions which will be held about the many-sided genius of Tagore should begin with the discussion on education. Because all these are essentially the function of the educationists—not the educationists in the narrow sense of the term. We sometimes interpret education in a very narrow sense; but education is in a sense interpretation of life. Education in a sense is realisation of the significance of life and formulation of policies and programmes which will make life better than before they were formulated. Tagore was in this true sense an educationist in every aspect of his activities. But even if we take education in the more narrow and formal sense, education in the sense of teaching in which we very often use a teacher, in a comparatively narrow sense, within the limits of definite curricula, within the limit of definite pattern of education, even then Tagore had a very great deal to give and it is very interesting; because in many ways his ideas of education were partly a reaction, partly a rebellion but also partly continuation of the tradition he found all around him. Like a true revolutionary, he knew that the truest revolutions never, completely break away from the past. In fact, the past lives and re-lives and a rebellionary action is a reaction against a certain situation and that situation positively and negatively influences what happens after the revolution of the reform has taken place and Tagore had the genius and wisdom to see that many things had to be discarded continually.

Life, he once said, is a continual shedding of what we have collected. Life is a journey and a human being is a passenger, voyager and traveller and is continually shedding but at the same time he is also collecting all the time and the new lives in new form in the old or if I might convert the statement, I would say, the old lives in the new form in

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the new. Tagore realised that his educational theories were also—while on the one hand, were based on immediate life and experience, they were also a vision of many things which were beyond the views of his compatriots.

He led rather a special life in many ways. He was a son of a rich family. We heard this morning from the general President that the family had fallen into comparatively ill-fortune by the time Tagore was born. But in Indian languages we have often a saying, that even a dead elephant is worth a hundred thousand rupees. Those who are Bengali, will probably remember the proverb immediately. Well, the Tagore family had fallen on evil days perhaps. But this dead elephant was worth a hundred thousand rupees. Therefore, it was an affluent family, affluent society compared with the average standard of the families as they go in India—and the result was very largely, Tagore was kept away from the children of his own age,—in a comparatively secluded atmosphere, comparatively artificial atmosphere, brought up largely in a company of servants, of paid employees, servants of various orders. Using again the term servants in the literal, technical sense and not in the sense of any menial—because even when there were menial servants, a kind of relationship had been established with them. And Tagore, therefore, felt from his own life and experience that a child cut away from contact with nature, left very largely in the hands of paid employees, suffers certain deprivations. He is denied the joys of love and he also learnt that wealth is not always a blessing particularly for a child. He has said that a young boy likes to play with dirt, wants to sit on the dust, wants to soil his hands, wants to do all sorts of things, a hundred mischiefs—climbing trees, breaking his bones, sometimes doing things which are forbidden. But in a very rich family the restrictions are too many and, therefore, one of the cardinal principles of his educational theory became that the child must be given freedom, freedom to develop all his faculties, freedom to commit mistakes, freedom to commit wrongs within limits. After all a child cannot commit a very serious wrong and if therefore the child is given the freedom to

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commit mistakes and commit wrongs, perhaps in after life many major mistakes will be avoided.

Tagore also felt that this moving the child away from immediate contact of nature retarded his development and he, therefore, made it a cardinal article of his theory of education that the child must be brought up in the lap of nature, in the immediate contact of nature. The beauty of morning, the beauty of the sunset, the splendour of the skies, the dancing season that he very often said—his favourite phrase very often in Bengali was '*Sar ritur nritya lila*'—the dance and the play of the six seasons with which time rings the changes throughout the world. All these the child was to imbibe and he held that in this way something of the grandeur of nature, something of the beauty of nature, something of the harmony of nature would permeate the mind of the child.

Tagore was not the first to emphasise the importance of nature and return to nature but there is one distinctive aspect in his emphasis on nature as a principle of education, use of nature as principle of education. Generally we think of adapting ourselves to nature or mastering nature; conquest of nature is a phrase which has become very popular especially in the last two hundred years. Tagore believed neither in the conquest of nature, nor in conquest by nature and he believed that the essence of wisdom lay—and education was partly preparation of the young generation to attain that wisdom in harmony with nature. While it is not a question of mastery by or mastery of, but of harmony with nature and he felt that through this harmony with nature not only would the child's nature and temparament develop but also the basis will be laid where a child will be able, when the child is grown up to live with harmony with his fellow men.

Tagore believed very strongly that many of the social ills arise out of the disintegrated personalities of the individual. Where individuals are disintegrated, where there are discords within the personalities of the individuals, you cannot possibly expect a society where there will be harmony and, therefore, he held that if you can build up integrated

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personalities of children through education in this way—education in which there will be freedom, education in which there will be scope for the development of the capacities and faculties of the child, education in which there will be co-operation and mutual harmony within individuals and among individuals,—then alone would a society develop where many of the causes of modern conflicts would disappear.

Another thing Tagore learnt through this early experience of his—the cruelty it is to make children sit for long hours. The cruelty of all the time imposing on them, dictating to them, of instilling information into them without making adequate allowance for the free play of the imagation, the will and the intellect of the child. He, therefore, from the very beginning held that activity must be an essential element in education. The child must not be a passive recipient but he must actively co-operate. Tagore devised all kinds of interesting little experiments himself, I am told. I never had a good fortune of being his pupil. In fact by the time I could have been a pupil he had probably given up teaching children himself—I do not know. Our general President is in a better position to tell us how Tagore actually taught than perhaps anybody living in India today, but I have been told that he used to devise little experiments of his own. He used to ask boys: "There is that tree? Tell me what is it height? Just guess,"—and those boys who could guess correctly were given some kind of reward by him. He used to give them bricks or stones. "Lift them up. Tell me what is the weight?" These are very minute examples. Not perhaps very important if you look at them—in an isolated manner but they show the approach of the man. In everything he wanted that the initiative should come from the child. There should be spontaneity and there was always this experimental attitude, always this trying to find out through experience, enriching the experience of the child.

Again the principle of activity is not a new thing in educational theory. Many educationists in the East and in the West, before Tagore, at the time of Tagore and after

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them, again and again, emphasised that all education must depend upon the activity principle. But here again Tagore gave some contribution of his own, gave a personal twist to his idea of activity. I think he was one of the very first in modern times who said this activity of the children should also have some social utility, some social significance and therefore, from the very beginning of the school which he started at Santiniketan in 1901, he wanted that the work of the children should have some social significance, some economic utility.

Today in India, we talk of basic education. Basic education as the national pattern of education, in which a very great emphasis is placed on craft—craft as an element in education. Educating children through craft, so that from early childhood, they understand the significance of labour, the social function of labour and from their very early childhood they value co-operation among individuals. To a very large extent, this is a continuation of Tagore's thought but again there is a distinction. For Tagore, spontaneity of the child. the freedom of the child, was more important than any other element in education and therefore Tagore never expected and in fact, I think, Tagore would have condemned if anybody had suggested that this social aspect of education, social utility of the craft should be pushed to an extent where education is sought to be made completely self-supporting. Tagore would never have admitted, he would never had supported any kind of activity where this spontaneity or creativity was replaced by monotony or repetition. He wanted this action to be varied. He said again and again, life is diverse, life is manifold, life is multitudinous. Its infinite variety must be reflected though in a very small scale, though naturally on a milder key in the life of the child. The child as a child is a member of the society and therefore childhood and all its activities will have social significance but at the level of the child's experience, at the level of the child's attainment, at the level of the child's expectations, at the level of the child's hopes, at the level where these are potentialities, where these are continually encouraged to grow rather

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than as a finished fact. He did not want semi-skilled workmen as finished products. He would much rather have people of great potentialities and these potentialities had just been suggested. This again is an element of value which we cannot neglect or if we do neglect it, we do so at our peril. Another element which today has become almost commonplace in India's educational theory but when Tagore found it out, it came almost as a revolutionary truth; but then sometimes the simplest things are really the most revolutionary things. Any one who practises a craft knows—it is very difficult to be simple in language, in line, in music, in sculpture; in fact simplicity is often the end of attainment, the end of endeavour. Well, this was a very simple truth but it had a revolutionary explosive character at the time it was formulated. This was the statement that children should be taught in their mother tongue. Now as I said it is a simple thing and when you put it in that way it would seem odd to suggest that there was any revolutionary character about it and yet at the time of Tagore's birth and early childhood it was very often fashionable not to know one's own mother tongue. In fact one of our greatest poets, a poet whose genius is among the highest that all our languages produced, in his school days took great pride in the fact that he could not speak Bengali correctly and certainly could not write Bengali correctly. I was told this morning we have amongst us a great poet of Bengal today who also when he writes Bengali, sometimes commits spelling mistakes. Many of you will know whom I am referring to. But in any case spelling mistakes aside, Tagore was born at a time when the idea that education should be through the mother tongue seemed curious. Not only so even our political activities in those days were always carried out not through the mother tongue, not in Bengali in Bengal, not in Marathi in Maharashtra, not in Hindi in Hindi speaking areas, but everywhere in English and when, I believe in 1887, Tagore suggested that the Congress should use an Indian language, there was a kind of shocked surprise at the temerity of the young man of 25 or 26, unknown, almost unknown in those days, not certainly a politician,

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with some reputation as a poet, as a rising young poet. This young poet advised great statesmen and politicians as to what language should be used in political discussions of our country. If I am not mistaken—I think I am not mistaken —Tagore's was the first address in 1908 where in a political conference the presidential address was given in the mother tongue. That was the first time that on a political platform anywhere in India such an obvious thing happened. This seems very odd, that an address which is meant for millions of our countrymen, is meant to advise them, to guide them, to suggest policies for them, to formulate programmes for them should be in a language which the majority of them will never understand.

Well, he introduced this principle. Today it is commonplace but at the time Tagore formulated this idea of the mother tongue as the medium of instructions, it was a revolutionary idea but as I said earlier like most revolutionary ideas it is very simple. Simple ideas are usually revolutionary.

One final point. The way Tagore grew throughout the way his vision grew. When he started the school at Santiniketan his preliminary idea was that here children would be taught through the mother tongue in the lap of nature, in close contact with nature, in an atmosphere where harmony with nature will be the cardinal principle of education. He believed in residential education for that reason. Because he believed that through residential education alone that childhood can be given that opportunity of close contact with one another and with nature. In large cities, these facilities cannot be provided. But as I have said his ideas continually grew and he very soon realised that national values are of the greatest significance.

Tagore was one of those who always believed that every nation has a contribution to make and any idea of obliterating the distinctions of different groups, is not only impractical but is almost criminal. It would be impoverishment of human civilisation and culture if any particular strain was lost and this infinite diversity, this variety, this multiplicity of forms, functions, customs, traditions, achieve-

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ments—give richness and splendour to human life and human civilisation. But at the same time he believed that this love of our own culture, love of our own language, love of our own peculiar traditions, institutions, faith and belief should never clash with other people's love of their own culture, their own traditions, and their own institutions. In other words, he believed that nationalism could flourish only in a context of what may be called internationalism. In fact Tagore did not like the terms nationalism or internationalism. He spoke of humanity, of universal man. He believed in the universal man, the universal man who manifests himself in infinite diversity in different areas. Now in logic, in philosophy, we will remember the universal always expresses itself in particulars and every particular is different from every other particular. Otherwise it would not be a particular at all and Tagore took over that idea into education as well. And therefore in Santiniketan he tried to build up Visva-Bharati where the world would be at home. It is not a question of India and other countries facing one another as distinct entities. Their peculiar contributions would certainly remain, their characteristics would certainly be maintained but they would be part of the grand symphony of human civilisation and human culture. Tagore believed that in this true universality of spirit alone can education be realistic and fruitful and offer to modern man a way out. With his great emphasis on individuality, it was inescapable that for Tagore, the teacher became the key-stone of any education system. Again and again he said of our country and I think that will apply partly to other countries as well, that very often when we think of education, we think of the syllabus, we think of laboratories, we think of libraries, we think of buildings, we do not generally think of the teacher. We even collect students and then go about looking for a teacher. Tagore said that perhaps the true way of a university—the true way of educational institution is for the teacher to emerge. Where the teacher is, there a school is. Tagore referred with pride, affection and regard to the great European tradition where the great universities grew; because a few devoted teachers collected to-

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gether. A few devoted teachers—they learnt and they taught, and through this mutual process of learning and teaching great universities have grown up, like those of Milan, Paris, Oxford and Prague. All were here in our own country in ancient days and wherever there was a teacher an educational institution grew up. Tagore believed that it is the teacher who is the essential element, who is the keystone to any educational system. Without the teacher, nothing happens. However good your system may be on paper, however brilliant your collections of books may be, however good a laboratory may be, however magnificent your buildings may be, without the teacher nothing happens. With the teacher even if all these other things are missing (certainly these are handicaps), a great teacher to a large extent overcomes all those handicaps and deficiencies and makes education real and vital. Tagore said : " A teacher is one who learns. One who does not learn is not a teacher." You can light a lamp only from a flame. If the flame has gone out of a lamp it cannot light other lamps and teaching for Tagore was a process of continual diffusion of light—lighting million lamps from one lamp, lighting millions of lamps from those lamps which have been lit. In this way there would be again this grand co-operation of human minds in all ages, of all countries, of all races, of all languages in the quest for truth, beauty and goodness.

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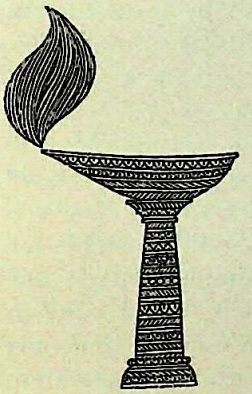
Norman Cousins

OUR DEBT TO TAGORE

I bring you greetings from the United States. I also extend to the conference congratulations on this occasion. I wish—if possible—on my return to do justice—I shall certainly try—to this occasion.

I should like to say something to you about the preparations in the United States this year to help to commemorate the 100th birthday of Tagore. In the United States the Indian Committee—in co-operation with the Tagore Committee will be bringing out a special edition of the collected works of Tagore. We hope also to arrange an art exhibition travelling across the country of the paintings by Tagore. In addition, we are arranging for special lectures in many universities and colleges in the United States for this occasion.



It is clear to me that we have come together not merely for the purpose of paying tribute to Rabindranath Tagore but for the purpose of acknowledging our individual debts to Tagore. I share in that great debt. You see—mine was a typical western education. In that sense I am a half educated man, because

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I was educated for living in only the half world—white western half. My debt to Tagore and also to Gandhi and Nehru is that it helped me to emancipate myself from my rather unhappy conditions and to attempt to complete my education. In too many parts of the west indeed, we are educating people to be half educated men. We educate ourselves in the virtues and values of western civilisation and those virtues and values are real indeed. Now we have educated ourselves adequately for access to the overwhelming majority of the world's peoples. We have educated ourselves to be different people, that is to say we are aware of the difference but we are not aware that the principle of significance of these differences is that they have no significance, and in many parts of the east I was to be made—I was to be surprised that the ease with which it would be possible to communicate with peoples across the supposed barriers which are lying that is customs, and cultures and in another sense I am very grateful to Tagore and also to Gandhiji. Gandhiji taught me that the individual need never be overwhelmed by history. Gandhiji taught that the individual need not be overvictimised by great events. History says Gandhiji is plastic, the individual cannot affect history. Tagore taught me that there is loyalty beyond nation, loyalty to man. Tagore taught me something about the essentials—citizenship of the human commonwealth. Tagore served that citizenship. Tagore saw nothing inconsistent between nationalism and internationalism. Tagore's approach to India was to mankind. Gandhiji's approach was to mankind to India. Both complemented one another. Both made possible individuals. And also as Nehru has said the awareness that India can be free only as the world itself is bold. There is nothing inconsistent I repeat, between nationalism and the outer world. Indeed, Tagore made it clear that nationalism can fulfil itself only in an interdependent world. Tagore also spoke of the uniqueness of man as pertained to the interdependence of nations. You see in today's world, there is a very real question whether man can preserve his uniqueness. Jawaharlal Nehru has spoken about the uniqueness of man.

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Nehru has also spoken about the fact that our generation is not rising to the challenge. Nehru has spoken about the fact that when India was fighting for freedom, people had got up for a cause greater than themselves. They found in themselves a dimension which perhaps was never before known. This dimension became real in the struggle for India's independence and Jawaharlal Nehru asked "where is the same fierce determination?" "The same fierce idealism which animated us years ago". And when I walked out I heard one of the young people say, "But Nehru does not realise that we now in our generation do not have the same cause that he had in his." Panditji somewhere else said what the young man suggested, Panditji was talking about an India, struggling for its independence. That was a unified goal." All of us could attach ourselves to that goal but we have now achieved our independence. What goal will unite us today?

I submit that there is a goal which will unite not only citizens of India but all citizens of the world. This is the goal of mankind. In our time the uniqueness of man and only the uniqueness of man has come into question. Nations have now fashioned absolute weapons that can eliminate this uniqueness from this world. That is a real question indeed. Well, our planet can be made safe for human habitation. Will time recognise that oneness and act upon that oneness to save our world which is the only world we have. If so, to those who say that there was no cause left to unite us, I say and I am sure that Tagore will say today, that the greatest cause in history now exists and faces us with great challenge. Can man wherever he is overcome his superficial difference—overcome his fascination with the superficial differences and enable him to recognise that this planet can be made safe for the human diversity. Tagore would say "transcend yourself to your immediate concern and consider the fact that the survival of mankind today is the issue of all people and values of mankind." Now this is not enough to come here it seems to me just to pay tributes to Rabindranath Tagore. It is not enough for us to define and determinate the eminence of his greatness. It is necessary

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for us indeed, it is mandatory for us to ask what would Tagore have said to us. It is necessary for us to ask how we can serve the ideals of Tagore and not merely repeat the ideals of Tagore. Tagore was interested and concerned with universal ideals as reality, not as abstractions. He was concerned with universal ideals because he believed that man was one. If, therefore, we are to preserve the ideals of Tagore we must si mply transcend ourselves from all limitations we have, more of immediate problems and join hands across the sea in the cause of 'world to be safe' and free for humankind.

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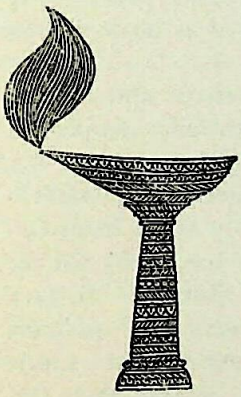
B. V. Keskar

THE NOBLEST FLOWER OF A RACE

While thinking of this subject, to my mind comes a day, nearly 48 years back, when I first heard him singing. The poet was visiting my college, the Kashi Vidyapith in Banaras and when we met him, he asked us, "Well, what do you want me to do?" We said, "We do not want you to speak, we want you to sing" and he sang four songs. They still are impressed upon my mind; because he did not sing simply as a musician. He sang as a musician, as a poet, as a littérateur and everything combined. All the emotions and sentiments were combined in that song of his. That was the essence of Tagore as I saw then and it has always been impressed on my mind. As his contribution to the Renaissance of Indian Culture is manifold, it has been memorable also in the field of music. His contribution as far as I see mainly lies in trying to harness the great gift of music to the service of poetry and literature. He tried to fashion a new music and that is what is now popularly known as Rabindra Sangeet, but I would not like you to run away with the idea as I see many people doing that he was



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not acquainted with music. He was acquainted very well with music. In fact he told me that he knew and he had studied the traditional music quite well. He composed a number of traditional songs, Dhrupad, and I have seen some of them sung and they are quite beautiful. His acquaintance with Indian music was so profound that he realised its great beauty, its profundity and the depth of emotion. In all he did but he tried to bring that music nearer the public and that is how Rabindra Sangeet came into being. I have felt that there is a misunderstanding regarding the question of music. Many friends felt and they have also expressed it sometimes in speeches as if there is some conflict between Rabindra Sangeet and the traditional music. I do not think that it is correct to say so. First of all, let us be clear that Rabindranath was himself a great musician and he was a great poet. It is rare to find such a combination in one person and he gave birth to many new forms, musical as well as poetical. At the same time he understood the beauty of both the traditional music as well as the new form which he was trying to produce. Music is a dynamic phase. It is not static and it was quite proper—not only proper but welcome—on the part of such a great genius as he to try to produce new form in music also.

The result is as pleasing as it is permanent and I hope that during the course of centenary celebrations, people all over the country, will have the pleasure of listening to his musical compositions and Rabindra Sangeet and what it represents. The misunderstanding probably arises from the fact that people do not realise that music has many forms. The highest form of music will always be abstract. In fact what is the difference between poetry and music ? Music tries to express in song and poetry tries to express in words and therefore, the purest form of music is bound to be wordless : everywhere whether it is in India or outside. And therefore, we should not consider that there is any conflict between the purer or more abstract form of music or the more concrete one. They are both essential. They are both parts of the same musical law and I hope that those who have only tried to study one aspect or a few aspects of

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multi-sided genius that was Rabindranath Tagore, will not misunderstand what he wanted to put before the world by considering that there is any conflict between what is known as Rabindra Sangeet and the more profound and larger aspect of what is known as traditional Indian music.

I remember that he himself was always pleased to sing many forms of traditional songs and what is the basic traditional forms of music are there for various transformations and modifications that might take place in the course of new compositions in music. The source of his musical inspiration came from those traditional forms, whether they were folk forms or classical ones. If we study his life and his compositions closely, we will find that he had made a close study of the musical forms of the dances of practically every part of our country and he had absorbed from them what he liked and what he considered good and noble. And he forged whatever he saw into something new and even more beautiful. That was the great genius of his that he took from all the fountains of Indian culture whatever he found suitable and put into something new and great. This applies more especially to music and dance. If we try to find the source of the various tunes that he composed and the various dances that he composed, you will find that there is a trace of every folk source and traditional source in the country there. We should not try to find out how he composed it and or why he did it. That was genius. He did not do it or base it on rational logic. He did it as only an inspired genius could do, but my point is, that we should remember if we study his music and dance properly, that he has imbibed all that is best and finest in Indian culture. In that he was a true Indian. He had a vision as large as the whole country and his outlook transgressed the limit of a State or even of the country. There are those who have devoted all their lifetime to the study and also to the singing of his songs, they will no doubt, put them before you.

My only request to you is, to imbibe the large and catholic spirit that lies behind all his compositions. Tagore wrote in Bengali. But Tagore is not a Bengali. He is that—no doubt, but he is something more. He is a great

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Indian; because he had, as I said, imbibed from every nook and corner of our country, whatever he could get the best and the noblest. In some senses he was a great world citizen; because his vision rolled throughout the world and he tried to grasp and absorb whatever he could get from the every nook and corner of the world. He stands today as a great torch-bearer of the Renaissance of Indian Culture. India had during the last century of the struggle for independence many-sided revivals. Tagore was the leader and the symbol of the cultural revival of our country and today we salute him as the great symbol of the spirit of our country, because it is culture which really is the quintessence of a country's spirit. The noblest flower of a race is embodied in its culture and that is what Tagore symbolises for all of us and let us salute in him that great spirit which represents the spirit of whole of India.

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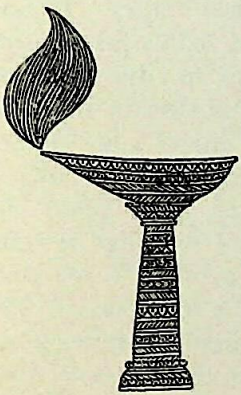
Richard Church

TAGORE: THE POET OF SUNLIGHT

Rabindranath Tagore came to England in 1877, at the age of sixteen. He had already made some reputation as a prolific poet in Bengal, but of course, in that remote island in the northern ocean, he was a stranger in a strange land. It is impossible to comprehend what this eager young genius felt as he entered what appeared to be a period of refrigeration in a climate and amongst a people renowned for low temperature and reserved approaches. Nevertheless, he was not unhappy there, as he has put on record in his book of reminiscences. He went first to school at Brighton, and then to University College in London, where he lived in the house of a doctor. One of his most lively recollections is of studying under the famous, but rather formidable Henry Morley, who taught him to appreciate 17th century prose, and particularly the *Religio Medici* by Dr. Thomas Browne of Norwich. It is significant that this wonderful piece of efflorescence should have appealed to him, because the rhythm of this prose has a curious affinity to that of his own later work. It exfoliates by a kind of



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verbal inspiration and linking-up, in the Elizabethan manner. This is a form of emotional thought, a process of conflagration with the fuel of words to feed it. The Golden Age of English letters in the 16th and 17th centuries functioned almost entirely by this process. I should call it the prescientific process, because it depends not principally upon factual associations, but upon that supra-rational capitalisation of imagery by which the poet must always work. It is no less real than the scientific, though in Western Europe it has been submerged, or partially submerged under the authority imposed by the inductive scientific processes of Western philosophy during our marriage with scientific experiment, and still more scientific achievement in the interests of material certainties.

There is much to be said about that, as we all know, but I want to relate it to the personality and the work of India's great poet, who as well as possessing a wholly national genius compatible with the life and aims of his people, carried within him also a practical and rational direction of mind towards a method of unification which I would dare to say is European in its manner and its political values. It was this combination of two forces within one man's personality which made him so influential, not only as an educationalist and as a social doctor in India, but as a missionary into the Western world who has done as much as any of your people towards a mutual understanding between you and us. I hesitate to compare him with your other great poets, in whom your literature is so rich. Without knowledge of your language this cannot be done, but it is evident to me that Rabindranath Tagore carried on the great work begun 150 years ago by Ram Mohun Roy, your first missionary to England. In spite of the interweaving of our histories over the last 300 years, the English have known as little of the Indian way of life as the Indians have known of the English way of life. Even today, and I speak for myself, we come to India knowing so little about her, her fields of thought, the vast complexity of her social structure, her ways of life. This ignorance makes me hesitate to address you at all. It certainly makes me want to cry out to beseech you to come and teach

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us, with vigour and positive design, in the conviction that as our great poet Thomas Hardy said "the exchange of international thought is the only possible solution of the world".

I am certain that it is such people as Rabindranath Tagore and Ram Mohun Roy who are elected to carry on this great work towards the purpose which our gentle Thomas Hardy stated in those words.

That is why I regard it as a privilege to come to India and to take part in this Centenary celebrations. We are at a moment in history, the history of a great re-organisation of the human race throughout the world. It is urgent that we should understand each other and be encouraged to throw down the barriers that have kept us apart since the beginning of the story of mankind. Those barriers have been known to be at their highest between the East and the West. If we are to survive, all of us, we must in some way learn to throw aside political hesitations and all suspicion and fear, so that we can give and take each with each during the establishing of a new way of life, which shall be equitable for all men, irrespective of race, colour, nationality, and every other form of bias both mental and physical.

I believe that such men as Rabindranath Tagore are prophets of this desirable achievement. It is useful today for a European to look at him from this point of view. I have no other qualification to assess the astonishing variety and beauty of his work as the small amount of his work that he translated himself is indefinitive of the quality of the whole. He mastered the rhythms of the English language and maintained their rugged forcefulness, while at the same time adapting them to the more fugal and elusive flow of sensibility which is native to your people and has conditioned your religious structures and your personal relationships. That is no small achievement. It is one of the many proofs of this combination of two strands of genius in the one man, of which I have already spoken, the visionary and the administrator. It seems to me that he was most happily named Rabindranath, essence of the light of day, the health-bringing sun which cancels out the diseases of darkness and superstitions.

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I want now to find a way of understanding the match between these two sides of Tagore's nature. Was it possible for the poet-prophet to work in harmony with the economic and social reformer? These are the two aspects of him which have made his reputation, done his work, and established him as a monument not only in his own country but throughout the world. What was it that gave him his authority and his confidence in himself so that he could stand up against the devastating storms which raged in India, and indeed the whole world, during his lifetime; the storms of the two world wars that broke down the ascendancy of the West and the feudal hegemony of the East. Those storms are still raging, but the discerning observer can see a break in the sky. During Tagore's lifetime, and especially towards the end of it, there was no such gleam of light. In fact when Tagore died in 1941 the storm was at its worst. But did that affect him? Surely the serenity of his spirit survived even that, and he went out of the world as he came into it—a man marked by a serene balance of mind and emotion, moving with a quiet authority to assured purposes that were unshaken by criticism, disappointment and adversity.

Such a character and such an achievement can only come together in a man or woman who has discovered the secret of being simple. Tagore was an example of the harmonious man. He seemed to be guided from the beginning by a direct and unquestioning vision which led him toward a philosophy of wholeness, of unity. That is one reason why I have regarded him as a necessary prophet in these later stages of the history of human thought where the battle against the evil of dualism, of multiplicity, of the overwhelming distraction of opposing peoples and theories, has begun to be sorted out into something that should be adequate in its unity for all men, no matter what their origins or their claims upon nature and upon each other.

I believe that it was the poet in Tagore which provided the lantern to guide him through this confusion. It gave him authority to challenge the seeming contradictions that arose in the world when science broke up the old certainties.

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He returned to the past in order to find his way round to the future, but in doing so he lit up the present day with the light of his music. Let me illustrate from his own sayings how he regarded poetry, which for him was synonymous with beauty. This is what he says:

> "Beauty is no fantasy. It has the everlasting meaning of reality. The facts that cause despondence and gloom are mere mist, and when through the mist beauty breaks out in momentary gleams, we realise that peace is true and not conflict; love is true and not hatred; and truth is the one, not the disjointed multitude. We realise that creation is the perpetual harmony between the infinite ideal of perfection, and the eternal continuity of its realisation; though as long as there is no absolute separation between the positive ideal and the material obstacle to its attainment, we need not be afraid of suffering and loss. This is the poet's religion."

Our own poet Shelley, by way of Platonism, held the same belief and stated it with the utmost conviction. He was called a mad-man by many of his contemporaries, but then European thought at that time was in a state of disintegration under the shattering impact of the beginning of the age of industrial development.

Now comes a further statement by Tagore which carries his principles into a more controversial stage, and one which is likely even today to be antagonistic to many people, as it was when Shelley also enunciated it. Tagore says:

> "In the poet's religion we find no doctrine or injunction, but rather the attitude of our entire being towards a truth which is ever to be revealed in its own endless creation. In dogmatic religion all questions are definitely answered, all doubts are finally laid to rest. But the poet's religion is fluid, like the atmosphere round the earth, where lights and shadows play hide and seek, and

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the wind, like a shepherd boy, plays upon its reeds among flocks of clouds. It never undertakes to lead anybody anywhere to any solid conclusion; yet it reveals endless spheres of light, because it has no walls round itself. It acknowledges the facts of evil; it openly admits the weariness, the fever and the fret in the world where men sit and hear each other groan; yet it remembers that in spite of all there is the song of the nightingale, and haply the Queen Moon is on her throne and there is

> 'White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine,
> Fast-fading violets covered up in leaves;
> And mid-day's eldest child,
> The young musk rose, full of dewy wine,
> The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves'."

The more one thinks about that statement by Tagore, the more one realises that it is an authoritative definition of the right function of the poet in society. It has always been challenged by hierarchists whether a priest or commissar. It is a proclamation of the final necessity for freedom of thought and the expression of that freedom of thought through the art of letters. Tyrants always strike at it as a first stroke with the sword of oppression. We have seen that gesture in the world today, and we know that it is likely to be repeated again and again throughout the history of the evolution of human society. But in the end freedom wins, because it is a necessary environment of renewed life. And the human race is not yet extinct.

But how is this principle applied? How did Tagore himself put it to the test? We know that when Gandhi appealed to him to join the Swaraj movement, he replied "Gandhi, the whole world is suffering from a cult of selfish and short-sighted nationalism. India has always offered hospitality to all nations and creeds. I have come to believe that we in India still have much to learn from the West and its science, and we still, through education, have to learn to

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collaborate among ourselves." Here is another thing he said to Gandhi: "India should today be inviting teachers and professors from all over the world to come and teach in India, but also to learn from us of our own cultural heritage."

We see there a direct statement by Tagore of his belief in the unity of life, and of his proposal to work in trying to promote that unity in human society, regardless of race, colour and creed. All this he tried to put into effective practice at his community in Western Bengal. Yes, the spirit of joy in life (Nandini) and the spirit of joy in work (Ranjan) are there embodied together in the corporation of love. He expresses this in his play *Red Oleanders*. His English secretary, Leonard Elmhirst, who started the Dartington Community in England based on Tagore's principles, says this of him: "One of the most difficult of all aspects to portray of this many-sided personality is that which encompassed and expressed the artist. He used to disclaim any knowledge as to the source of this bubbling spring of energy that found an outlet all through his life in the making of poetry, music, songs, dramas or paintings. He knew that to deny this power would be fatal, and that not to let it bubble up the way it wished would risk serious mutilation of some vital part of his being."

That perhaps touches the secret spring of Tagore's energy. As he fought this double-fronted battle, the miracle is that it was not a battle but a gesture of love in which the first thing to be noticed was the tolerance and the ease with which his nature confronted the daily problems of life. In this aspect one of his sayings is worth noticing as an index towards equanimity, which was one of his strongest weapons. This is what he says:

> "Always keep a vacant corner for some lazy do-nothing dreamer or poet, or singer like myself. Remember that poets must always have their place. Some of them may really turn out to be quite important people. So study and revive the past, not as if it were a museum piece, but

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> with the help of artists like Nandalal, and of musicians like Dinu, and with some madcap poet like me, so that in a new dance and song and drama you may vitalise those old streams with fresh currents."

I cannot emphasise too much this value in him; Tagore's urge to make his fellow-countrymen realise the value of routine as a discipline in strengthening their passiveness of mind and in making them become more active and hopeful in the battle against circumstance, and the particular adversities of their environment and nature. In this respect I would compare those problems with the difficulties of my own countrymen in England and indeed throughout Western Europe, where the need is just the opposite; the need to turn from too much activity and energetic obsession with things and actualities, the need to turn from these toward meditation on what they really signify, and to the discovery of the source from which they spring and which determines their ultimate value. In one of his letters Tagore has a happy allusion which again demonstrates his constant belief and striving towards the unity of these two approaches to life. He sees the value, and indeed the stark necessity of marrying energy to patience, practical ability or what philosophers have called pragmatism, to a quiet determination of the merely relative authority of material values. Here is what he says in a letter written when he was only 21 years of age:

> "The more one lives alone on the river or in the open country, the clearer it becomes that nothing is more beautiful or great than to perform the ordinary duties of one's daily life simply and naturally. From the grasses in the field to the stars in the sky, each one is doing just that; and there is such profound peace and surpassing beauty in nature because none of these tries forcibly to transgress its limitations.
>
> Yet what each one does is by no means of little moment. The grass has to put forth all its energy to draw sustenance from the uttermost

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> tips of its rootlets simply to grow where it is as grass; it does not vainly strive to become a banyan tree; and so the earth gains a lovely carpet of green. And, indeed, what little of beauty and peace is to be found in the societies of men is owing to the daily performance of small duties, not to big doings and fine talk. Perhaps because the whole of our life is not vividly present at each moment, some imaginary hope may lure, some glowing picture of a future, untrammelled with everyday burdens, may tempt us; but these are illusory."

It was inevitable that in the quest for that fine wholeness in his life and in his relationships he should have to say, towards the end of his life, in another letter which he wrote to Elmhirst:

> "I carry an infinite space of loneliness around my soul through which the voice of my personal life very often does not reach my friends; for which I suffer more than they do. I have my yearnings for the personal world as much as any other mortal; perhaps more."

That is a sad note on which to end, but in the long run it is the inevitable note for a man who refuses to be partisan, whether of a political or a religious dogma, or even a philosophical method. The significant thing is that it did not reduce Tagore to the despair which too often overclouds the sunset of many great men's lives. He remained at the end illuminated by his belief in that passionate scepticism which is the final glory of faith. This is worth consideration because it is more than a paradox, it is a statement of something which I believe to be factual—a basis of all contact with that final reality which is revealed in the face of what we call God. This is the secret of living and in the end must be revealed. Tagore fought all his life to unveil it, and I believe his triumph is that he succeeded by combining his work as a poet and his functioning as an administrator.

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He was a unified man, a whole man, and as such was an example to his country and a missionary to the West, who still points the way to the final harmonising of our differences, and therefore toward our mutual strength through this coming phase of the struggle of the human race to understand itself, and to make itself a clear reflection of that godhead out of which it has evolved towards a purpose greater than we know.

This then is the message with which Tagore salutes us in our troubles. They may be troubles of our own making as human beings; but we have in ourselves the power to dissolve them, so that finally we can proclaim harmony in the words of Tagore's final passage in *Gitanjali,* the poem which first made him famous in Europe:

> "In one salutation to thee, my God, let all my senses spread out and touch this world at thy feet.
> Like a rain-cloud of July hung low with its burden of unshed showers let all my mind bend down at thy door in one salutation to thee.
> Let all my songs gather together their diverse strains into a single current and flow to a sea of silence in one salutation to thee.
> Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain nests let all my life take its voyage to its eternal home in one salutation to thee."

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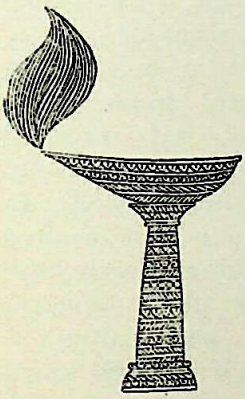
Vivekananda Mukherjee

RABINDRANATH AND INTERNATIONALISM



In this great city of India on the Arabian sea-shore, we have gathered together to celebrate the birth centenary of the great poet who first saw the light of day on the bank of the Bhagirathi a hundred years ago. That river of Bengal and the sea vividly recall to our minds the tremendous sweep of the poet's course of life with its oceanic breadth. Overflowing the boundaries of the province of his birth his abounding spirit rushed on imparting to history a fresh momentum and a new dimension of significance. He reached out his eager hands towards man's common humanity, uncircumscribed and undelimited by geography or political and economic idealogies. Let us try to figure to ourselves the dimensions of that great river of life which consummated its course in the ocean of universal humanity.

There could not have been a better choice of venue for the Conference than that of Bombay, the gateway of India, leading out as it does to the outer world by sea and air night and day. From here we can now girdle the globe in a fast plane in a matter of hours; but long

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ahead of us Rabindranath had gone on his voyage of the spirit round the world. He made this flight not on the fairy wings of imagination, but with the more imperative propulsion of an urgent faith in the future of humanity.

Rabindranath inherited the idea of a united world from an earlier exponent, Raja Ram Mohun Roy. Early in the 19th century the Raja went to Europe and imbibed the best of European liberalism. He was the first Indian to warmly welcome the idea of the emancipation of man, wherever subject, and he was also the first among us to moot the idea of universal peace and world fraternity embodied much later in the League of Nations and the United Nations Organisation. In fact, Raja Ram Mohun Roy was much in advance not only of India of his age, but also of many advanced countries of the west. Another great Bengali of about this time also deserves to be remembered with gratitude. He is Swami Vivekananda, the sage and monk, who gave to India's thought-life a profoundly humanistic reorientation. He brought about the assimilation of the intellectual adventure of industrialised Europe to the age-old Indian cultural traditions and sought for an individual spiritual entity among the diverse races of mankind.

This quest for the realisation of human oneness can be dated much further back in Indian history. In the Vedic Hindu and Buddhist India this ideal had traversed mountains and seas and encompassed all peoples and races in its dream-world of universal love and brotherhood. In fact, it is this intrepid quest of ancient India that inspired Bengal's leaders of thought in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Bengal today is shorn of all her glory,—divided, destitute, branded with the stigma of parochialism. I would, however, crave your indulgence to be allowed to say that parochialism has ever been the furthest from the Bengali mind and we have at all times responded with eager zeal to ideas of international peace and friendship. The Bengali has always been a progressive and a radical, and it is as a pioneer and leader of liberal radicalism, if I may use the expression, that Rabindranath claims our homage.

There have been many poets, artists and leaders of

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thought in India who have broadened and enriched the stream of Indian culture, but in the last several centuries we hardly meet with one like Rabindranath who on the one hand was in the vanguard of the Indian nationalist struggle for freedom sending out his clarion-call to all soldiers for the struggle, and on the other hand, castigated the chauvinistic nationalism of Japan and of several countries of the west in flaming language. For a time, between the years 1905 and 1925, this apparent contradiction between Rabindranath the nationalist and the prophet of internationalism shocked and bewildered many among us who were then in their early youth. This was because internationalist ideals had not till then penetrated Indian political consciousness and we had only learnt to look upon nationalism as the crown and fulfilment of our aspirations.

It was then that Rabindranath took upon himself to imbue us with the prophetic ideal of the emancipation of man and lashed out against the 'fierce self-idolatry of nation-worship'. Branding nationalism as the 'great-menace' he pointed to the impending political transformation in the horizon of the coming years and said: "There is only one history—the history of man. All national histories are merely chapters in the larger one. And we are content in India to suffer for such a great cause." This voice of prophecy from the poet of a weak and subject country led many in India and abroad to heap ridicule upon him as an idle dreamer and the idolater of an inane creed. But let us ask ourselves why he chose to censure nationalism so severely. He came to know through his extensive travels the inner urges motivating nationalism. He saw that the western nations had foresworn their humanistic ideals and their heroic spirit of sacrifice and self-denial. Western science and technology wedded to commercialism bred its hateful progeny, namely, modern imperialism which planted its iron heels in many countries of Asia and Africa. Imperialism, red in tooth and claw tore to pieces millions of many nations. The barbaric ferocity of this brute power cast its baleful shadow across the continents. And yet it hallowed itself in the name of nationalism and thus sought to escape oppro-

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brium. Rabindranath felt with all his heart that imperialism must be halted on its bloody track and its menace to civilisation must be fought if humanity was to be saved. He threw out an audacious challenge to this monster of imperialism and announced to the world that it was not the Economic Man not the Political Man, but the Moral and Spiritual Man that should be re-installed as primal in the hierarchy of human values. The western commercial civilisation battening on enormous productivity and unlimited profits must be made to let go its stranglehold on the world. From the second decade of this century till his death in 1941, the poet's organ-voice rolled out with majestic resonance and gradually Indian political thought was impelled to his way of thinking.

About this time a world-shaking event, namely, the establishment and rise to power of the Soviet State had taken place. A new society was born, wedded to the ideal of total revolution and vowed to the liquidation of colonialism and exploitation. Rabindranath went on a mission of pilgrimage to the new land and in his famous book, *Letters from Russia,* hailed the new State founded on the ideals of mass-education and public good. The poet's mission, confluent with the new world-force, gathered an irresistible impact.

India is free today; but the problems of abject poverty and widespread illiteracy are still to be solved. Rabindranath had sent out his call to his countrymen time and again to fight and remove these many deprivations, and to endow our derelict villages and destitute towns with the plenitude of a new life. The heart-throb of this rebirth can already be heard, however faintly, in the working out of the Five-Year Plans that we have adopted for the economic regeneration of our country.

India's foreign policy also brings us a step nearer to the realisation of the poet's dream. The ideal of peaceful co-existence, adumbrated by Russia under Lenin, has been redefined and remoulded in keeping with Indian heritage and set forth as the objective of our foreign policy. It would not do to forget the contributions of Rabindranath towards this fruition. From 1881 till his death in 1941, the poet

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indefatigably preached those very ideals of political righteousness and international morality that the Panch Sheel enshrine. In 1881, Rabindranath, a youth of twenty wrote a startling essay named, *The Death-trade in China* of which many of us have not heard. I am tempted to quote the first few lines of the essay: "Out of greed for money a whole nation has been made to take poison. Such treacherous thuggery is unheard of. China cried, 'I won't take opium.' The English trader replied, 'Don't be unreasonable.' He bound the hands of China, thrust opium into her mouth with the gun-barrel and said, 'Give me the price for the opium you have taken.' For long the English and the Chinese have been carrying on this extraordinary commerce."

The vehement protest against European commercial barbarity that Rabindranath had raised in his early youth was voiced again after the rape of Africa in an unforgettable poem of his maturity. Today, India, China and many other countries of Asia and Africa have shaken off their fetters. There has been such an uprising in these countries that the last few years have come to be called the Afro-Asian era. In 1941 during the calamitous days of the Second World War the prophetic words uttered by the poet in his famous essay, *The Crisis of Civilisation,* have almost literally come true. With abounding self confidence he had then spoken out: "I deem it a crime to look upon as final the apparently irremediable defeat of humanity." Again and again has the poet heartened us with his faith in the ultimate triumph of life; again and again has he gone forth to sing to the world India's message of man's unconquerable soul. On the occasion of his birth cenetenary let us bid farewell to the hundred years gone by—a century of pain and humiliation, and face the prospects of the century ahead with faith and confidence in the resurgence of the Moral and Spiritual Man, —Man raised above all degradation and creating for himself a civilisation of undying lustre. To the beacon that showed us the path to a glorious future, to the eternal sentinel watching over man's birthrights, let us bow our heads in reverence.

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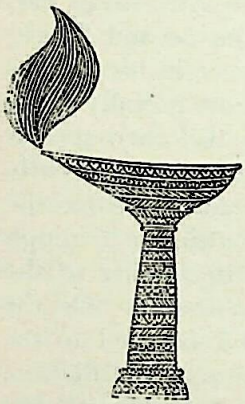
Dietmar Rothermund

TAGORE AND GERMANY

In Germany this year there will be numerous functions like this one for which we have assembled here in order to honour your great poet Tagore. New German editions of his major works have been published and I may claim that, perhaps, in no other country outside India will the Tagore Centenary be celebrated on such a large scale as in Germany.



I have called this a lecture on Tagore and Germany but I will not give you an historical account of Tagore's association with my country. Since this is a symposium on Tagore's world outlook, I want to emphasise only a few points which will serve to illustrate the Poet's message to the world, taking his association with Germany only as one example of his universal mission.

When Tagore came first to Germany in 1921 he was enthusiastically received by great numbers of people who crowded the lecture halls wherever he went. His message of hope and harmony was a consolation after the great war. He was venerated as a seer and a prophet, his sympathetic understanding and his

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conviction, that defeat and loss were but a blessing in disguise encouraged the German people who were groping for new ideas and values. He attributed his own independent development to the fact that his family had gone bankrupt, identifying himself with the fate of Germany he indicated that the defeat and the fall of the old order would give the German nation a chance to start afresh and as he put it " to make use of the fire that had scorched her for lighting up the faith to a great future...." However, the fire that had scorched Germany proved to be insufficient. A far greater conflagration was still to come and we can only hope that our capacity to convert heat into light does not require the fire of an even more devastating blaze.

Tagore's message was but a translation of the basic theme of his poetry. His work is permeated by a mood of longing and expectation. The imagery of waiting and coming, searching and wandering is ever present in his poems. This mood had a special appeal to the German mind, preoccupied as it is with the ideas of becoming and striving. But coming is not becoming and the Poet was liable to be misunderstood. Time and space are only dimensions of the separation of God and the soul in Tagore's universe, they are interchangeable parts of a lower level of reality which can be disrupted by the sudden presence of the aim of all longing. Tagore's affirmation of the life which Albert Schweitzer contrasted with India's tradition of the negation of life—as he saw it—has to be understood in this context. Tagore saw life as a suspense in the separation of God and the soul. German idealism had also separation of God and the soul, but here the suspense was conceived of as a motion of evolution. With Tagore, however, the separation was wished by God to create an object of his love, and the relationship of God and the soul in this suspense is not a laborious process of evolution but it is *lila*—the bitter and sweet fusion between union and separation in all its manifold aspects.

Of the three ancient ways of perfection, Gnanayoga, Karmayoga and Bhakti, Tagore chose the latter, but he was greatly impressed by what he termed the Western world's

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prospect of the path of Karma yoga. His recognition of the validity of Karma yoga also appealed to the German mind. Work and soul were closely connected in the life of Germany as Prof. Erick explained to Tagore in a famous letter and the link between the two had broken. In the rapid transition from a society based on arts and crafts and agriculture to an industrial society Germany had experienced the painful dissociation of work and aim and it dreamed of a restoration of the creative unity of man's endeavour. The Poet was hailed as one who knew about this unity and could help to bring it about. The people often forget that the Poet was hmself a seeker, they looked to him for peace which as they thought had been preserved in the East while the West had lost itself in the material world.

The coraline unity of man's life and work, the longing for a new humanism was reflected in the German Youth Movement which tried to shed the inhibitions and artificialities of the Victorian age and propagated a cult of youth and nature. It is this movement indeed which prepared the ground for Tagore's triumph in Germany. The votaries of this movement rediscovered old songs and instruments and roamed through fields and forests. Young and enthusiastic, they felt akin to the Poet's spirit and when he was in their midst they sang and played for him and took him along to the hills and the forest.

The quest for a new humanism also led to a re-interpretation of the old imperial nationalism. Germany has been able to produce the most generous internationalism as well as the most fierce nationalism. Like Indian nationalism German nationalism originally developed under foreign rule—in the Napoleonic era—as a noble concept of national unity and self-determination. But Germany was faced again and again by the problem of territorial unity and integrity in an intricate system of a balance of power. This tension vitiated German nationalism, but there always remained the quest for the redeeming grace of international co-operation and world citizenship. Tagore's message seemed to convey this redeeming grace. In this respect his message is as valid today as ever before.

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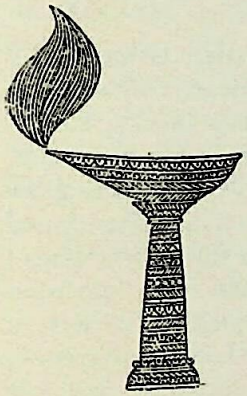
Umashankar Joshi

TAGORE'S POETIC VISION



Mahatma Gandhi said of Tagore that he had raised India several scores of steps upwards and added that he had thought and thought about Tagore and come to the conclusion that the most outstanding thing about him was his personality. Tagore was indeed one of the architects of modern India and even in the galaxy of the great sons and daughters of renascent India, he shone out as a man apart because of his abundant gifts and all-embracing humanism. Tagore winning the Nobel prize for poetry put India on the cultural map of the world. After Vivekananda's appearance at the Chicago World Religions Congress, this was India's another assertion of her spiritual vitality in the days of abject political subjugation. For years Tagore was India's unofficial ambassador to the world at large. Over and above putting self-respect into the hearts of his countrymen, he taught them to keep the window open on the wide world and showed by personal example that to be a true Indian was also to be a true world-citizen.

When we look back to Tagore's times

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we find that he was one of the first world-citizens ever. His literary work was suffused with such peace and quiet piety —'poetic piety' like that of Dante as Ezra Pound observed— that his contemporaries all over the world found much solace and healing power in it and Tagore was looked up to as an oriental sage, a seer, a prophet.

A great patriot, a seer, an educationist, a non-conformist reformer and an internationalist, Tagore was essentially a literary man. He was a composer of music and in the evening of his life took to painting also. His work on and for the stage was equally outstanding. It is however through the word that his innermost self has manifested itself in all its beauty and truth.

He has written poems, songs, stories, novels, plays, diaries, letters, travelogues, autobiography, personal essays, textbooks for children, learned articles on grammar, prosody, history and science, on social and political problems, on philosophy and religion.

We find that the life around him flows into him and is transformed into art. His life is a continuous essay in experiencing and turning that experience into things of beauty.

During the Shilaida period he writes *Glimpses of Bengal* and short stories based on an intimate contact with rural Bengal and at the same time his stay on the Padma yields him a rich harvest of songs. The young zemindar, 'Babu Mahashaya', advises Madhu Biswas what crops to grow and revives Triveni, a boy whom his master had abandoned thinking he was aying of cholera. Indeed the personality of Tagore is at work on several fronts simultaneously and even in literary creation the same experience yields a variety of artistic representations. And yet there is hardly any repetition. It appears that the various forms he chose perfectly suited his different artistic predilections. The short stories and the novels were steeped in realism. Who knew the sad plight of the Bengali woman as intimately as Tagore, as also her innate strength ? His plays gave him an opportunity for providing the inmates of his Ashram with a feast of song and pageant. They also embodied symbols which were after

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his heart. His essays were meditations on some subject or the other. But it is poetry in which the word appeared as the distillation of Tagore's whole personality. He has written about a thousand poems and twice as many songs and these constitute his principal claim to immortality.

II

It is in Tagore's poetry that we find all that is best in the Indian tradition summed up—the spiritual quest of the Upanishads, the preoccupation with beauty as exemplified in Kalidasa's works, the craving for communion with the supersensuous expressed in sensuous images by the Vaishnava poets, the carefree laconic intimacy of the Bauls of Bengal, the grand opulence of the Mughal Court, and the open-air manner of the folk song mirroring the life of the common man. It is a case of mustering a whole civilisation in one's own person and recapturing its significance in terms of beauty.

In India Valmiki and Vyas before him had in the hoary past summed up whole epochs, and underlined the message those epochs held out. Kalidasa took all the splendour of India, material as well as spiritual, in his ken and passed it on to the coming generations in immortal speech. Tagore in our time experienced in his person all the essential Indian heritage and made it articulate.

I am reminded of Rilke's words on Michelangelo—

"That was the man who always reappears
when any age, to mark its closing years,
strives yet once more to recapitulate.
There's one who still can heave its total weight
and hurl it into his abysmal breast."

III

Besides epitomising the soul of India in his poetry Tagore ushered it into the age of one-world-ness. This is very tellingly accomplished in his novel *Gora*. Gora was

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the protagonist of all that was best in the Indian religious tradition. All of a sudden he discovers that he was a European. The question posed by Tagore in this novel is: Has India nothing to offer now to Gora, an outcast? And he has already supplied the answer through the characters of Anandmayi and Paresh Babu. Both of them had been outcasts long before and unlike Gora, by choice. They preferred to be outcasts from traditional or revolutionary religious societies with the one supreme craving for love. To me it has always seemed that Tagore suggests through these two characters and the special predicament in which he has put Gora, that the true India transcends Indianness.

IV

Tagore is the poet of the *Vishva-manava,* not merely the universal man but the man-in-the-universe, or shall we call him the All-Man, the whole man, for he alone who partakes of wholeness becomes whole. Of man Tagore was never tired of singing. His 'Farewell to Heaven' is an eloquent homage to life on this earth. His Valmiki aspires to turn men into gods through the rhythm of his song.

Tagore did imbibe the Western spirit of humanism. He respected science as a part of the grand quest of man for knowledge and himself wrote a handbook, *Vishva-parichaya,* an introduction to the universe. But in the wake of science came the machine, and Tagore brooded anxiously over the problem of man-machine relationship.

It would be a mistake to equate Tagore's love of man with European Renaissance humanism, which no doubt influenced him as just mentioned above. Western humanism is man-intoxicated; it has put man at the centre of the scheme of things. Tagore's humanism is just not man struggling against and conquering nature, man pitted against an unkind universe or man entrapped in a cruel destiny. Over and over again Tagore hints at a harmony between man and man, man and nature, man and the Universal Spirit. The motto he selected for his University is: *Yatra vishvam bhavati eka-nidam*—where the universe has become

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a single nest. The free and unfettered expression of personality, i.e. selfless creativity, is the key to attaining to All-Man-hood. This is what finds a poignant utterance in his excellent allegorical play *Muktadhara* (*The Free Current*) and what made him start and run his educational experiments.

Tagore with his English *Gitanjali* moved to the centre of the modern civilisation and if the Western world was deliriously charmed for a while by his voice, it was perhaps due to the calm and repose at the core of his work which concerned itself neither with the Eastern nor with the Western man but with the man-in-the-universe, the whole man.

Even when the generation which has directly come under the charm of his unique personality passes away, this aspect of his personailty—and it is of the essence of his personality—will ever be revoked in the minds of men as they come in contact with his work.

V

Tagore will live by his writings—most by his poetry.

As an artist Tagore has always experimented with metres, diction, form. Sometimes the mood which has occupied his creative mind is overworked but he has always a way of outgrowing it. In all the variety of moods the same central vision is manifest and so is his abounding love of nature. After Kalidasa hardly any Indian poet has delineated the beauty of nature in such concrete detail. Tagore's works bristle with pictures of the infinite play of light and shade under the Indian sky—those of the ceaseless cycle of seasons. The immutability of India's mountains and vast plains has passed into his poems.

Much as I cherish his songs I would not lay great store upon them. Few songs survive the first line, if only because the first line is *une ligne donée*—the one line given by Providence. No wonder the best songs of Heine, Shelley and Tagore are usually short ones.

Great poetry concerns itself with patiently carving out

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shapes from material that offers resistance. Tagore's is a lyrical genius, but for his major work one has to turn to his odes, pieces like those in *Balaka* and the dialogue-poems. It is in these poems that he has got rid of verbiage and his gift of magnificent rhetoric is pressed into serving art. In Tagore's lyrical pieces there is often to be found a cloying sweetness, sometimes a sort of saccharine sweetness as that of (and no doubt under the influence of) Jayadeva, but Tagore saw its limitations as his eassy 'Kekarava' testifies and he soon outgrew it. But even a near-perfect piece like 'Urvashi' has '*vilola-hillola*' thrown into it. But for some slight superfluity, it is a masterpiece of rhythmic balance matching the cosmic vision of the life-spirit in eternal dance.

> "Thou hast placed thy ruddy lotus-feet
> Extremely light on the Lotus of the full-bloomed
> Desire of the Universe!"

This is lyricism touching epic sublimity.

The dialogue-poems are the farthest limit of objective portraiture lyricism can reach. Who else but Tagore could have dared to treat the *Sati* episode? These five pieces reveal Tagore at his very best. They point to the heart's vision of *Dharma*. The characters are presented in the hour of crisis and as they painfully but triumphantly pass through the short hour of trial, the whole story of their life is unfolded in retrospect. The poet shows how the truth of life is grasped not by intellect but by the power of feeling, during a moment of intense living. And the truth is as Amabai's father describes it "the abiding *Dharma* as visualised by the heart." Gandhari says that this "*Dharma* is an end in itself."

These dialogue-poems embody in a more concrete, more robust form what was suggested by his devotional poetry of *Gitanjali, Naivedya* etc. They embody Tagore's vision of man struggling, through tremendous sacrifice or even through death, to come to terms with—and establish complete harmony with—the Eternal law (*Nitya Dharma*). This is the poet's central vision of man evolving into All-Man, *Vishva-manava.*

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VI

A mention should be made of Tagore's last poems. They at once strike as stark to the point of being naked. The words in *Gitanjali*—"My song has put off all her adornments, she has no pride of dress and decoration."—would be literally true of these last poems.

May be all art, however great, partakes of the nature of cant, a kind of falsehood. Eight days before his death, he addresses the Deceitful One (*Chhalana-mayi*): "He, who can suffer effortlessly the deceit, receives the abiding right to peace at Thy hands." The poet is ready to shuffle off the artistic coil, following his Chitraganda who said to Love: "This borrowed beauty, this falsehood that enwraps me, will slip from me, as the petals fall from an overblown flower."

Two days earlier, this sojourner off our planet had slaked his thirst for knowledge at the fountain-head of eternal silence:

"The first day's sun
Had asked
At the new manifestation of being...
Who art thou?
There was no answer.
Year after year went by,

The last sun of the day
The last question uttered
On the western sea-shore
In the hushed evening...
Who art thou?
He got no answer."

VII

Rabindranath's vision of the whole man puts him by the side of the great seers, the teachers of mankind. In sheer artistry he is second to none. The poems in which

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there is a happy fusion of the twin gifts are sufficient to rank him with the great poets of mankind. One is reminded of Goethe, when one thinks of Tagore. The works of each of them bear the stamp of a world-mind. Both were 'not afraid to live' and both embraced their whole time. Both were emancipated souls free from fear and hatred. Tagore was every inch an Indian, as Goethe was a German, and at the same time a world-poet. Poets like Tagore will be more and more in vogue as man comes into his own.

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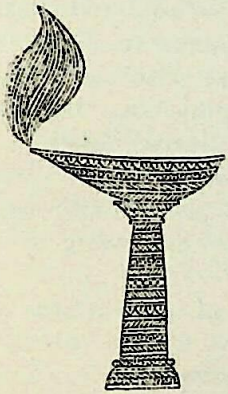
L. Novichenko, *U.S.S.R.*

RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND THE SOVIET UNION

The name of Rabindranath Tagore, a great son of the Indian people, a gifted poet and writer, a sincere and profound humanist, a noble champion of peace and friendship among peoples is highly honoured by the whole of progressive humanity. The art of this remarkable author which made an epoch in the development of Indian literature is profoundly loved and respected by the Soviet people. Readers in our country came to know of Tagore's works in pre-revolutionary years, translations of *Geetanjali* and many other poems appeared in 1914.



After the great October Socialist Revolution in Russia, the art of the outstanding Indian writer found its way to the broadest reading public of our country and more than 40 editions of Tagore's works in Russian translations alone came off the press during 1917-41. Collections of poems and short stories and such novels as *Gora, The Wreck, Home and the World* and others were printed many times.

A few years ago an eight-volume collection of Rabindranath Tagore's works

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which included his major works in the sphere of poetry, prose, dramaturgy, literary criticism, and education was printed in an edition of 90,000 and sold out in no time.

All in all, during Soviet years 2.5 million copies of Tagore's books have been printed in the USSR in many languages of the peoples of our country.

These figures confirm the fact that Rabindranath Tagore is, indeed, received in our large and multinational Soviet home as a true friend, loved by all people—a great man of letters indeed! An embodiment of the great artistic genius of the Indian people, a people for whom the working people of our country have long nurtured most sincere and profound admiration fostered by many works of ancient and medieval Indian literature long since known and read in my land.

In the new period the great and many-faceted art of Rabindranath Tagore became for our people the most brilliant and meaningful 'discovery of Inida' which only true art can provide.

His works present truthful and captivating reflection of the life of Indian society during that intricate and tense stage of its historical development. Thanks to Tagore's books, we saw and understood the ordinary people of India with their sufferings, hopes and aspirations, became acquainted with the life of the country's diverse classes and social groups. We were initiated into a world of the ideological quests, arguments, characteristic of the educated sections of Indian society, and in particular its intelligentsia of that period.

In the works of the author of *Gora* and 'Two Bighas of Land' we admire the writer's profound love for the ordinary people of India, sympathy for their sufferings and resolute condemnation of the colonial regime thrust upon them.

The great artist with a keen eye regarded the life of Indian society of his time, of the struggle which took place in it between the forces of the new and the old. In his works he came out against feudal remnants, condemned the caste system, resolutely raised his voice in defence of the social and human rights of Indian women, showed the

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absurdity and harm of antiquated customs. All the works of Tagore are in fact an indefatigable appeal for a new free and sensible life permeated with the light of great humanistic ideals.

The great civic enthusiasm, the passion of humanism, the realistic loyalty to the truth of life, critical-mindedness—all this lent great force to Tagore's work and determined their outstanding place both in the history of India's and world's literature.

In this stormy and tense time when the threat of a new war is so great, the unity of all forces fighting for peace and capable of defending this cause is important as never before. The noble voice of Rabindranath Tagore, this peace champion and enemy of war and oppression, powerfully resounds in the voice of the whole of India, which occupies a prominent and worthy place among the peace-loving countries. We well remember how this great Indian branded fascism, condemned imperialist aggression, fiercely opposed racial enmity and discrimination.

Imbued with hatred for war, Tagore's words appealed to the humanitarian conscience of the peoples like the words of Romain Rolland, the Mann brothers, Bernard Shaw and other progressive world writers. Tagore in his political poems came out in defence of the peoples of Asia and Africa, who were attacked by imperialists and in which he called for the struggle against fascist barbarism, found wide comment. During the years of World War II Tagore wrote an excellent poem dedicated to ordinary toilers. This poem was filled with unshakable conviction in the coming world-wide victory of the forces of peaceful creation over the forces of destruction.

In 1930 when Rabindranath Tagore visited the Soviet Union and what he saw at that time in our country filled him with unswerving faith in the complete victory of the historic cause of the Soviet people and at the same time inspired him with a new hope for a better future for the whole of humanity.

Standards in public education and enlightenment achieved by the Soviet system especially evoked Tagore's

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admiration and he wrote about this in detail in his famed *Letters About Russia.*

Rabindranath Tagore wholeheartedly greeted the birth of the new life in our country and left our country with a firm conviction that the Soviet Union needs peace and is sincerely fighting for peace.

These days the Soviet literary and scientific public circles are preparing for the Tagore Birth Centenary Celebrations. The Preparatory Committee headed by the famed poet Nikolai Tikhonov, Chairman of Soviet Peace Committee has worked out extensive programme to mark this auspicious occasion. It is planned to publish new 12-volume collection of the works of Tagore. Besides, the plays *The Daughter of Ganges, Chitra,* etc., which are being staged these days in many Soviet theatres, new stage productions are planned on other plays of Tagore; a biographical film is to be produced jointly by Soviet and Indian cinematographers; a joint scientific session on Tagore is to be held with the participation of the USSR Academy of Sciences, the Union of Soviet Writers and other organisations; monographs and essays on Tagore are to be published.

As far as I know Soviet Scientific Organisations intend to present Santiniketan with photostat copies of letters and manuscripts and other materials on the art of the writer available in the USSR.

Thus, your remarkable national celebrations to the memory of this illustrious son of India will be a significant event in the cultural life of the Soviet Union. Paying tribute to the life-asserting genius of Tagore we can assure that we shall do our best to promote the friendship and cultural relations with the great Indian people.

The lofty tradition of Rabindranath Tagore are alive today in the activities of the progressive Indian writers, are alive today in the hearts of the whole of progressive humanity which is working for peace, for freedom, and the happiness of all the people on earth.

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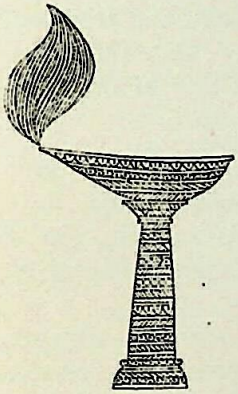
Probodh Kumar Sanyal

TAGORE'S CONCEPTION OF THE SPIRIT OF INDIA

The sponsors of this literary conference have extended to me a delightful opportunity to speak before you about some happy memories of the past when the old 'Pravasi Banga Sahitya Sammelan' was first conceived by the educated and advanced Bengali communities of Northern India during the 1920's.



As many of you may know, towards the middle of the last century when Bengalis were feeling the first impact of Western education and culture on themselves, they grew conscious of their own language and literature and began to experiment with new forms, expressions and ideas.

It was at his time, with the advent and introduction of the railway system in India, and automobiles in later years, that a big section of educated Bengalis scattered almost all over India from Kashmir to Mysore with different vocations and livelihoods, formed innumerable 'honeycombs' of intellectual associations in many parts of undivided India and in Burma too, by starting clubs, libraries, Kali baris and

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other cultural centres. After the capital of India was transferred from Calcutta to Delhi, when the new constructions were taken up by the then rulers, the influence of the educated section of Bengalis was no less than the other communities in general.

It was during this time that the distant Bengalis were feeling the pain of separation from the roots of their original culture and their own way of life. They tried to regroup themselves with the object of making social, literary and cultural contacts with one another, distantly separated and far away from their homes. With this object in view the old 'Pravasi Banga Sahitya Sammelan' was conceived. The only person at the time who could give a clarion call to the different groups of Bengalis, from Burma to Sind and from Kashmir to Travancore, to come and assemble together under the banner of Bengali language and literature, was the great poet of all times, Rabindranath Tagore. In this way the first sitting of the 'Sammelan' was held at Banaras, the seat of Sanskrit learning in India, in 1922, under the presidentship of the Poet, and Bengalis from all corners, from Burma, and even from Ceylon and Goa, were welcomed and received by the great savant of Hindu philosophy and pillar of advanced Hindu culture of the time, the late Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Pramathanath Tarkabhusan.

The conference by its tremendous success not only inspired the Bengali associations throughout India, but encouraged all Indian national literatures as a whole, which some of us, as young volunteers of the conference, witnessed in those days.

The Bengali communities of the country outside Bengal, which were practically lost among the masses of humanity of the sub-continent, were infused with a new spirit by the magnificent address of the poet towards a new path of all-India vision. In later years the subject-matter of fine arts and literature, till then confined within provincial boundaries, broke their walls of limitation and broadened the outlook of literary workers and artists to an all-India consciousness.

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India's mind and heart

India, as an entity, was conceived for the first time in modern history as a symbol of the highest spiritual and intellectual culture by two outstanding personalities: One was Swami Vivekananda in the sphere of Indian spiritual philosophy of religion, and the other, Rabindranath, in the domain of moral, intellectual, cultural and literary advancement. The image of the Motherland, not of Bengal, but of India Undivided, was worshipped in many of his epoch-making poems and fictions. When the other powerful literatures of the nation, including Bengali itself, were marching on to great progress, Rabindranath was singing and breathing the eternal spirit of India in many of his best songs, poems, dramas and other innumerable articles of literature. But during the whole life-span of Tagore, from 1861 to 1941, no Indian poet, however powerful, ever conceived such imageries in poems like 'Ayee bhuvana monomohinee' or 'Janaganamana-adhinayaka jaya hey', the national anthem of ours. The civilised world of today with all the continents in the East and West came to know of the actual form of Indian culture and refinement, coming down from ancient ages to modern times, through this roving poet of peace and culture. His untiring personal contacts with the countries and continents made him the unofficial ambassador of Indian goodwill and intellect during many stormy international situations in 1919, 20's and 30's. It was India's mind and heart that spoke through the poet's musical voice with his saintly personality. The meditating soul of eternal India with its profound love, kindness and compassion found its true expression in the poet. His great book *Santiniketan* is perhaps one of the best Indian classics, which is the essence of Indian culture springing forth from the early times. Who does not know today that in the dark days of British rule in the recent past, he was the only illuminating object as a kindly light, giving great solace to the suffering humanity of India? Many drops of tears rolled down from his many poems and songs which enriched the mental soil of our people during political persecutions. It was the pains and miseries of the whole nation, which are

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in many ways unheard of and untold, that brought out from the poet his last testament, 'Crisis in Civilisation' just before his death in 1941 and his great prophesy in terms of the British Empire *vis-à-vis* India, came to be true.

Symbol of Indian culture

Never before in the history of Indian literature was born a personality like Rabindranath who embraced the different diversities of Indian life into one unitary whole and gave it a fuller and nobler interpretation as he did in his lifetime. India was born anew in his heart. We are now witnessing before us the enthusiastic energy of all communities to assemble together in the common cause of enhancing the prestige of Indian literature and creating a healthy spirit among all the literary workers. It is a great joy for everyone today that the old Sammelan, renamed now as All-India Bengali Literary Conference, has been opened to all the workers of literature in India and abroad with the spirit of Rabindranath in the background.

I should say once more, that though he was a Bengali and was born in Bengal, Rabindranath stands out singularly before all of us with our natural shortcomings, as an intellectual giant of the East, holding his stature high like the statue of Apollo, higher than the highest peak of the world.

It is Rabindranath, the name and the landmark, which is the symbol of modern Indian culture!

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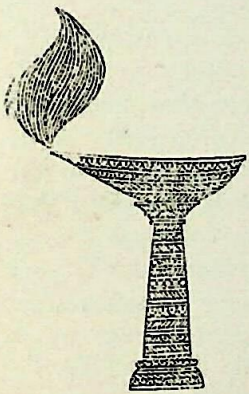
A. W. Trueman, *Canada*

TAGORE AS A WORLD FIGURE

We are commemorating a man to whom the name of genius may properly be ascribed. It has been given to very few of the sons of men to rise to such heights in so many of the areas which the searching spirit of mankind is impelled to explore. He was poet, dramatist, novelist, painter, musician, philosopher. And in these various manifestations of his genius he was indeed a world figure.



In recent months, as preparation for this great event, I have been trying to refresh and extend my knowledge of his work. I have been struck again and again by the evident fact that although Tagore *was* a world figure he had not ceased to be an Indian. And the more I have read and thought about his career, the more strongly I became convinced that he was a world figure not in spite of the unmistakably Indian cast of his thought and feeling, but on account of it. I know that Tagore became alarmed by the potentially—and indeed actually—disruptive force of nationalism for a world in which he longed that all men might act as brothers. But I suggest to you that his own life, and the

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example which he gave the world, reveal a type of nationalism that, in my opinion, can form the only secure foundation of world understanding and world peace. This kind of nationalism is based at once on the limitations of human beings and on the limitless powers of their imagination and love.

For me the key to this seeming paradox is found in words taken from his early sketch for the play *Nature's Revenge*. No doubt they will be familiar to you.

> "....the great is to be found in the small, the infinite within the bounds of form, and the eternal freedom of the soul in love."

Moving words

These moving words sent me searching for something I recalled among the letters of the Dutch painter, Van Gogh. At The Hague in 1882 Van Gogh wrote, "I see no other way than to work from models; one must certainly not blunt one's imagination, but it is by having nature under one's eyes and wrestling with it all the time that one's imagination becomes sharper and more true."

I interpret the statements of these two artists as a contention that the adventure of the human spirit must start, so to speak, at home, with the immediate that surrounds one. One proceeds from the small, which is the only pathway to the great, from the known, which leads into the unknown. And the great kindler of the imagination that makes these transitions possible is love. I see, as I read Tagore, that no world movement for peace has much chance of success unless it is based on the love and understanding that are nurtured, and can only be nurtured, by that which is within reach of us all. Surely it is the love I bear for the hills and forests and streams and winding roads of New Brunswick, so many thousands of miles from Bombay, that provides the light in which I see that another man's heart may be forever entangled by the plains, the hills, the rivers, the ancient monuments of India, and that his dilemmas and his exaltations, though different, are yet related to mine. As Tagore himself said, "In darkness the One appears as

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uniform; in the light the One appears as manifold." Perhaps it is not too much to say that a temptation which all the world must resist is that of being content with the half-light that reveals the complexity and variety of human existence but does not reveal the One which they compose.

Kindling power of love

It seems to me, then, that love of mankind, the conception of the brotherhood of all men, is an imaginative projection of feelings and concerns that, because of our limitations as individual beings, must have their origin in what is within the reach of our senses, does not fall outside the modest territory that can be reached and covered by the fallible human heart. And having said that, having recognised and confessed our limitations, we must admit that without the kindling power of love and imagination human beings do not easily break out of their parochial apathy; they tend to lapse, as John Stuart Mill said, "into the deep slumber of a decided opinion." Of this, of course, Tagore was profoundly aware. You will recall these lines from *Gitanjali*—I can give them only in the inadequate English translation :

"Where the mind is without fear and
the head is held high :
Where knowledge is free :
Where the world has not been broken into
fragments by narrow domestic walls :
Where words come out from the depths of truth :
Where tireless striving stretches its arms
towards perfection :
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
in the dreary desert sand of dead habit :
Where the mind is led forward by thee
into ever-widening thought and action :
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father,
lead my country awake."

This is Tagore's prayer for India. It could well be every man's prayer for his own country.

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India's internationalist

The insight with which Tagore wrote and worked for his own people—as I, a stranger, understand it—was the product of his unusual power of observation; of his brilliant intelligence; of his willingness to become deeply involved in the life of his countryman; and of the love and imagination which informed his whole life and raised his natural gift for language into the realm of great poetry. It was, it seems to me, this involvement in, and understanding of, his own country combined with this poetic power that formed the central elements in his capacity to bring India to the rest of the world, and to bring the rest of the world to India. Of the courage with which at all times he acted, braving the misunderstanding and the indignation of those whose good he sought, and of the zeal with which he served the cause of education, it is scarcely necessary to speak, so much are they now a part of public knowledge. I cannot sum up what I have said here in any better way than by quoting from Mr. Nehru's fine book, *The Discovery of India*:

> "More than any other Indian, he has helped to bring into harmony the ideals of the East and the West, and broadened the bases of Indian nationalism. He has been India's internationalist *par excellence*, believing and working for international co-operation, taking India's message to other countries and bringing their messages to his own people. And yet with all his internationalism, his feet have always been planted firmly on India's soil...."

Well, the nations of the world have a long way to go yet. I think they have a long way to go yet even in desire. Again Tagore has said it:

> "The desire of the bud is for the night and the dew, but the blown flower cries for the freedom of the light."
>
> (*Fruit Gathering VIII*)

How often Tagore uses the symbolism of light! As I leafed through a volume of his poetry a few weeks ago, I

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wondered if he knew *The Garden,* by Andrew Marvell. Tagore was well acquainted with English poetry, and it occurred to me that these beautiful lines from *The Garden* might well have struck an answering chord had he known them :

"Here at the fountain's sliding foot,
Or at some fruit-tree's mossy root,
Casting the body's vest aside,
My soul into the boughs does glide :

There, like a bird, it sits and sings,
Then whets and combs its silver wings
And, till prepared for longer flight,
Waves in its plumes the various light."

World brotherhood

Well, we are perhaps not prepared yet 'for longer flight'. The flower of world brotherhood, to revert to the symbolism of the *Fruit Gathering,* is not yet blown; it does not yet, I think, cry for the freedom of the light. But despite all our discouragements, despite the pitiless stupidity of human unreason in international affairs, it is not too much to believe,—at least, to hope—that the bud is still alive, that it is maturing, and that in time it will burst into bloom. If it ever does, it will have been helped, as it rarely has been helped, by the life and example of Tagore.

Perhaps this is the great function of the poet and the artist : to start from the immediate, from the small, from the known, and by the superior force and penetration of imagination and love lead lesser men out of 'the dreary desert sand of dead habit', rouse them from the 'deep slumber of a decided opinion'; and make them 'cry for the freedom of light'. Here we see that intellect is not enough, important though it is. (Believe me, I am not one to minimise the place of intellect in human affairs). But as Tagore himself has said, "A mind all logic is ike a knife all blade. It makes the hand bleed that uses it."

I suppose that what I am trying to say is that Tagore was a world figure because the roots of his thought and

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feeling were thrust deep into the soil of his native country, because he was able to bring to bear on that thought and feeling the transforming and widening power of love and imagination, because—in short—he was a poet, not only in words, but in the tendency and bias of his entire life.

Son of light

Twenty years ago, W. H. Drummond wrote of him in the *Hibbert Journal* as follows:

> It has been given to few teachers and still fewer poets to rise so completely above the boundaries of race and language, and to speak so directly to the universal needs of the spirit in man. At a time when old orthodoxies were being shaken, and spiritual vision and peace seemed a far-away dream, his universalism and his startling simplicity made a strong appeal. Under the spell of his voice beauty returned to the earth and quietness to the heart of man. Deeply rooted as he was in the culture of his own people, true as it is that his life and work have been one of India's most precious gifts to mankind, it is natural to think of him chiefly as a son of light, who has his followers wherever there is an unquenchable desire for fellowship, and peace and religion and beauty speak the same divine language of the heart.

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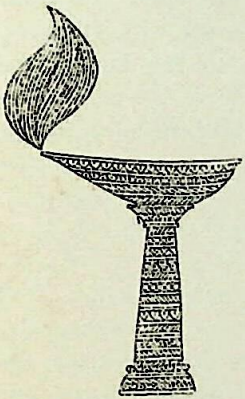
Burra Venkatappiah

TAGORE'S CONCEPTION OF RURAL RECONSTRUCTION AND VILLAGE WELFARE



The student of Tagore is continually surprised at the range of his art-forms and the diversity of his interests. This feeling gives place to one of complete amazement in one who attempts to study his life-work as a whole, including in that term Santiniketan and Sriniketan. The amazement is caused not merely by the many-sidedness of his genius but by the fullness of his endowments as a human being and perhaps, above all, by the depth of his intuitions in matters apparently unconnected with his work as poet and artist. The lack of connection is only on the surface because the intuitions derive from the same source as the music, the word-pictures and the paintings, the poetry and the mysticism, viz. a personality that was remarkably integrated in itself and at the same time was remarkably sensitive to every aspect of the environment. Freud said of Nietzsche that "his premonitions and insights often agree in the most amazing manner with the laborious results of psychoanalysis". If Nietzsche's genius was profound, it was also narrow. What

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is remarkable in Tagore is that the range is inexhaustible, yet the profundity remains.

I hope to show that in the ideas he propounded about village welfare Tagore was more than half a century in advance of the rest of the country. Meanwhile I should like to make the point that these ideas sprang from love, from understanding and from a passionate desire to better the lot of his fellow-men. To these main elements were added a very high practical sense and a realisation that science and not sentiment could deliver results. Those who knew Tagore in his later years speak of the eagerness with which he turned to the exposition of popular science in his essays and lectures. The practical and the scientific were combined with those other gifts he possessed as poet, humanist and mystic.

Lover of earth

Tagore loved the countryside, its "rivers and wide plains, rice fields and huts in the shelter of the trees." He loved the earth, the fertile soil of Bengal, both as the field that yielded the harvest and as "the loose earth, the moving earth that comes floating down the river, the earth that will melt in the showers of Sravan", the possessor of soft green beauty, Syamali, the name he also gave to the last abode he built for himself :

"The home of my last days I shall build of earth,
And call it Syamali.
When it crumbles,
It will be like a falling asleep of earth
In the lap of earth."

He loved the villagers, the men and women who toiled to raise crops and build houses. There are many passages of great beauty which describe the impression these people made on him, like the one about the "oldish upcountry man, tall and lean...jogging along the road to the market town" :

"I imagine he has his cow in his stall,
a parrot in the cage,
his wife with bangles round her arms,
grinding wheat,

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the washerman for his neighbour,
the grocer's shop across the lane,
a harassing debt to the man from Peshawar,
and somewhere my own indistinct self
only as a passing person."

But he did not allow himself to be drawn into illusions, picturesque or other. Soon it was the "harassing debt to the man from Peshawar" and many similar things that went to make up the hard lot of the villager which held Tagore's attention. "The sufferings of the people," he says "became intertwined with all my work":

"Come friend, flinch not, step down upon
the hard earth.
Do not gather dreams in the dusk. . .
Come down to the common life.
The web of illusion is torn, take shelter
within walls of rough stones."

Sense of realism

It must be clearly understood that for Tagore a sense of hard realism was no later acquisition. From the beginning it was almost as much a part of him as his poetry and his ideals. There is therefore nothing surprising in the fact that Tagore's conception of village welfare grew out of a practical and hard-headed impact with village life dating back to the days when, as a young man, he had been sent off to manage a portion of the ancestral estate. Thrown on his own resources, this scion of a zamindari family—one, moreover, who had been brought up in Calcutta—had to collect rent, tally accounts, maintain records, hear complaints and settle disputes. At first afraid of this unaccustomed job, he soon threw himself wholeheartedly into it and indeed evolved methods of accounting and record-keeping for which he became famous throughout the district. The old accountants protested—their strength lay in the obscurity of their accounts—but the neighbouring landlords sent their officers to the young man to learn from him

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methods which they thought had yielded wonderful results. The villages were many and he travelled long distances from Shilaidah to Patisar, by boat, by foot and in carriages. He says :

> "I was filled with eagerness to understand the villagers' daily routine and the varied pageant of their lives. I, the town-bred, had been received into the lap of rural loveliness and I began joyfully to satisfy my curiosity. Gradually the sorrow and poverty of the villages became clear to me, and I began to grow restless to do something about it. It seemed to me a very shameful thing that I should spend my days as a landlord, concerned only with money-making and engrossed with my own profit and loss. From that time forward, I continually endeavoured to find out how the villagers' minds could be aroused, so that they could themselves accept the responsibility for their own lives. If we merely offer them help from outside, it would be harmful to them. How could they themselves be stirred to life ?—that question gave me much food for thought."

Community development

This was the core of his thinking. How could they themselves be stirred to life ? It has to be remembered that he posed this question to himself somewhere around 1890, that is to say about sixty years before Community Development began to be talked of in India. He formulated the conception which today goes by the name of 'felt needs':

> "My intelligence bore the impress of my town-breeding. I thought that I would build them a house at the centre of their village; they would meet there when the day's work was over, and there should be readings from the newspapers and from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata; it would be a kind of club for them. I was sad to think of their joyless evenings, somebody repeating endlessly one single passage from a monotonous kirtan song, and nothing more.

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> The house was built, but it was not used. A teacher was appointed, but on one pretext or another, no pupil came."

In other words, if one may interpret this in the light of later experience, let the villager have a right to his own needs, if to nothing else. Help him, if you can, to build on those needs. But do not, for God's sake, import your needs into the village and call them his.

Tagore had no illusions about the goodness or altruism of village life. Nor did he have use for vague phrases such as 'social cohesion'. He gives examples to show that the villagers were averse to putting their labour into anything which was not of exclusive benefit to them. "They could not bear that any one else should get any benefit. Rather than that, they preferred to put up with inconvenience themselves." One instance he gives is very interesting:

> "My estate was a long way from the river, and there was continual water-shortage. I said to the people, 'You dig wells, and I will have the masonry work done'. They said, 'Well, that's a mean proposition, frying a fish in its own oil. We dig the wells, and you go to heaven and gain merit for supplying water—all by our labour'. I said, 'Then I shall give you nothing'."

Respectful donation

But Tagore did not stop there. He asked himself why this had happened to the village. There is deep insight and sympathy in his analysis:

> "I have seen for myself the insults borne by the poor, and the oppression practised by the powerful. Then again, these same powerful men have performed all the public works of the village. This oppression and this patronage have combined to destroy the villagers' self-reliance and self-respect. . . . I have never treated village people with disrespect. People who consider themselves learned and gentle-folk because

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they have passed examinations, do treat them with discourtesy. They do not know how to be courteous. But our Sastras say 'When you give, then give with respect'."

The sympathy and understanding, as I have said, were informed by a sense of what was strictly practical and scientific. Thus, it was that when he founded Sriniketan in 1922—an institution in which he thought one of the two great purposes of his life would come to fruition—Tagore had in mind certain principles which combined the humility of science with the limitedness of practicability. This is how he re-stated them on one occasion :

> "There are two sides to our village work. We have to work out from here, and along with that we have to carry on our own study. If we want to serve, we must learn. We must so endeavour that a power from within the villagers themselves may be working alongside us, albeit undiscernible by us. There is no need for us to think in terms of the whole country. I cannot take responsibility for the whole of India. I wish to win only one or two small villages. We have to enter into their minds, to acquire strength to work in collaboration with them. That is not easy, it is very difficult and will require austere self-discipline. If I can free only one or two villages from the bonds of ignorance and weakness, there will be built, on a tiny scale, an ideal for the whole of India."

Unfulfilled dreams

Tagore knew that to conceive an idea or found an institution did not by themselves suffice. He says in another context (speaking of Santiniketan):

> "When ideas are stated in a paper, they appear too simple and complete. But in reality their manifestation through the materials that are living and varied and ever changing is not so clear and perfect. We have obstacles in human nature and in outer circumstances."

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The difficulties of finance, personnel and organisation and more than all, the opposition from vested interests, most of which were outside the village, with ramifications in district towns and State capitals, meant that spectacular or even substantial results could not be expected. Tagore had forecast this and indeed no solution would have been possible in the circumstances in which he was working at that time. One of his aims, however, viz. the study or rural problems and the evolution of techniques, designs and methods which could be passed on to the cultivator and the artisan is being fulfilled progressively in the development of Sriniketan and of its component units such as Silpa-Bhavan (Home of Rural Crafts and Industries). In a sense (though only in a sense) National Extension has taken up on a country-wide scale some of the ideas initiated by Tagore; and in Sriniketan itself may now be found one of the institutions of National Extension in the form of the Social Education Organisers' Training Centre.

While some of Tagore's ideas, which were much in advance of his time, have thus found their way into the policies and programmes of Government, his dreams themselves remain largely unfulfilled. That is bound to be so. If his ideas were those of the practical reformer, his dreams were those of the poet and the humanist. And finally, for this too is very pertinent when we are discussing Tagore, his optimism was that of the mystic:

> "But I am thankful that my lot lies with the humble who suffer and bear the burden of power, and hide their faces and stifle their sobs in the dark.
>
> For every throb of their pain has pulsed in the secret depth of Thy night, and every insult has been gathered into Thy great silence.
>
> And the morrow is theirs."

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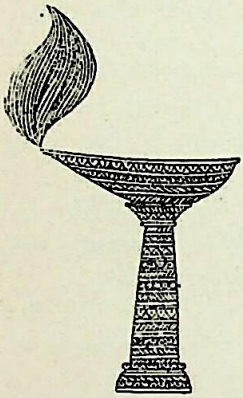
Leonard K. Elmhirst, *U.K.*

REBUILDING THE VILLAGES

Rabindranath Tagore's concern for the village people of India is apparent from the time in 1890, when, as a young man, he went to live at Shilaidah and took charge there of the family estate. In his serious writing he returns again and again to the problems of how to arouse in the village a pride in its self-government, in self-help, in economic independence and in its own art and culture. By his early purchase of a farm at the village of Surul, near Santiniketan, he laid the foundation for the comprehensive experiment in village reconstruction which he himself started in 1922 and later named Sriniketan.



In some small corner of India he was determined that Indian villagers, with the right kind of sympathetic assistance, could and would prove their capacity to face their own problems, stand on their own feet and find their way to a place of honour and self-respect in the modern world.

> "Our people need more than anything else a really scientific training that can inspire in them the courage of experiment and

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that initiative of mind which we lack as a nation. Sriniketan should be able to provide for its pupils an atmosphere of rational thinking and behaviour, for these alone can save them from stupid bigotry and moral cowardliness."

He wrote this in December 1937, and again in December 1939:

"My path lies in the domain of quiet integral action and thought. My units must be few and small. I can but face human problems in relation to some basic village or cultural area. So in the midst of world-wide anguish, and with the problems of over three hundred millions staring us in the face, I stick to my work in Santiniketan and Sriniketan, hoping that our efforts will touch the heart of our village neighbours and help them in reasserting themselves in a new social order. If we can give a start to a few village they would perhaps be an inspiration to some other—and my life work will have been done."

Man of science

It is rare in history to find in one human being such a wide variety of outstanding gifts. In our appreciation of Tagore—the poet, the singer, the actor, the painter the mystic and the philosopher, we are apt to forget Tagore the man of science.

Tagore was convinced that only with the help of science would rural India ever overcome its poverty, hunger, disease and drudgery, and that Indians must engage in every relevant field of scientific research to achieve this end, but not just, as he wrote to me, "to fill the storeroom," but to liberate the human spirit for ever higher forms of enterprise.

After our journey through China and Japan in the spring of 1924, Tagore wrote in a note of farewell as follows:

"Unless our different works in Visva-Bharati are luminous with the fire of vision I myself can have no place in them. This is why all the time when

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Sriniketan has been struggling to grow into a form, I was intently wishing that it should not only have a shape, but also light; so that it might transcend its immediate limits of time, space and some special purpose. If Visva-Bharati comes to attain truth through the life of those who serve her then she will illumine the path of pilgrimage and not merely fill the storeroom of benefits. ... A lighted lamp is the end for us and not a lump of gold. .... Let us bring all our power of imagination and create a new world. Nandalal is there ready for his task, you must also come and join us and let all your dreams shine across the boundaries of practical achievements."

Tagore was certain that science must provide the means, and that if these were wisely applied man would be rescued from a wide variety of avoidable misfortunes. But to what end? "To speed us" he said, "along the path of our pilgrimage", a spiritual pilgrimage so that though the journey would be fraught with pain and suffering, with hard labour and grievous disappointment, we might achieve a new sense of 'reality' of truth, of peace, of unity and affection, of human understanding and of compassion.

Is it surprising, do you think, that for me the few years spent in his service, though never easy, were the most exciting and the most challenging of my whole life?

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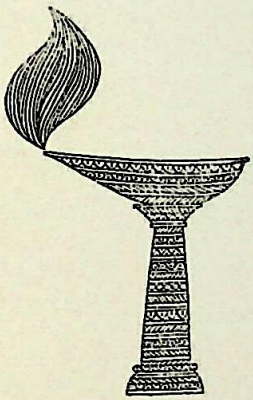
Juan Perez Creus, *Spain*

SPAIN TO RABINDRANATH TAGORE : AN ELEGY

Exactly a hundred years ago
that the waves of the Ganges
were singing blissfully.
Every drop in the sea
was pronouncing your name.

Exactly a hundred years ago
that the wind of India
was sounding the guitar
of the air of the palm-trees
pronouncing your name.



Hundred years ago,
only a hundred years and
thou Rabindranath, seem, like the world
so ancient, immense,
beautiful, indestructible !

From thy lips flowed
the words most beautiful
and thy fingers sounded
the strings most divine.

Thy words were music
for the soul of the world
and thy music was
a sweet oration of the words.

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Those bards, of millions of languages
they know thee,
and thy name they utter
with utmost regard
like the name of the Divine Spirit.

In my Spanish, O poet
your verses are a miracle
and your Bengali
has turned itself
into sonorous Spanish poetry.

Thou hast become so much our own
like the rivers Ebro and Tajo
like the moors of Burgos
the snow peaks of Gaudarrama
and the warm scented lemon groves
of my beautiful Granada.

Today, I come to thee, master
to sing to you silently.
Thou shalt listen to me, I know
that you are not dead,
you will live forever
in spite of that day of sorrow
when must come to an end
everything in the world,
when will be no more the Ganges
when the sea will turn into earth
when the earth will turn into a violent ocean
like the sun, like the stars
illuminating all,
emerges forth thy figure
immortal, powerful,
Oh, poet of the poets!
Rabindranath Tagore!

—Translated from the Spanish Original by Vijaya Mathur

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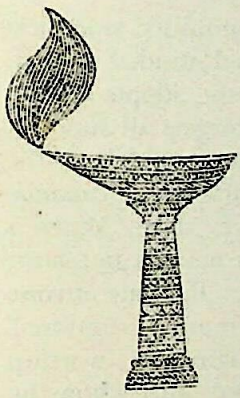
Lila Vidyant

GURUDEV'S ESTEEM FOR WOMEN

While saying that the first sign of manliness in the character of Vidyasagar was his partiality towards women, Rabindranath remarked: "The first sign of a coward is that the more he gets from people, even without asking for it, the more he becomes ungrateful. Are there many such wretched men who have been deprived of the affection, kindness and courtesy of women? But they do not think that they also have to do something for women in return. So, in our country, the happiness and comfort of women are the main topic for comics."



Similarly, we find manliness in the poet from the description we get from him of women. Numberless pictures of women are strewn over the vast literature of Rabindranath.

In his book, *Jogajog*, there is the bride, Kumu, whose husband has risen from poverty to riches. He looks down on everyone around him. He believes that money can secure everything in this world. After marrying Kumu he wants to exercise unrestricted mastery over her. When he covets her he does not wait to win her by conquering her heart.

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The way in which women spend their lives in our society pained the poet. A woman is useful to her household and her husband. It is convenient to have a woman in the house. Her life is an unchanging chain of cooking and feeding. It is filled with the wants and wishes of other people of the household. She can realise her own joyful self when death calls her. She says:

"I am a woman.
I am sacred.
The sleepless moon
Of the moonlit night is in tune with me.
If I were not here.
In vain would rise the evening star.
In vain would flowers blossom
In the garden."

She also says: "One who has called me to his bed-chamber of death is not only my master. He will not neglect me."

Nobility of woman's love

The poet has written much about the nobility, sweetness and depth of love in a woman. In a broad-minded woman there is such love, such motherliness that she adopts a helpless child even if it is not her own. She forgets all superstitions. The barriers of caste or creed cannot hold back the motherly affection of a woman. The character of Anandamoyee in *Gora* is one such. She says to Gora: "When I took you in my lap, I understood that a man is not born with any caste. A small child has no caste. If I hate anyone because of his caste, then God will take you away from me."

Rabindranath had kept the sacred lamp of worship kindled in his mind for the worthy women with whom he came in contact. While speaking of them, he wrote: "Sometimes such a bright picture of a woman flashed upon my eyes who cannot be termed as modern but who belonged to all times. Whenever we committed a fault in our conduct we saw light of forgiveness in their eyes. They lighted the lamp of love from the fire of virtue." This is woman's

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nature for ever. It is her nature to forgive all the faults of a man with a smiling face. In this lies her nobility.

The poet said that the greatest treasure of a woman is not her body but her mind. He wrote: "Oh beautiful one, what are you looking at in your mirror? Are you trying to find if there is any blemish in the offering of love which you are going to give to the dear one?"

To be able to offer the soul is the highest perfection in the nature of woman. The newly married bride starts on her journey towards her unknown home with numberless fears in her mind. The poet says that whatever her fate in future, she should be able to say: "I kindled a light from my life. I loved with all I had."

Rabindranath wrote in his book, *Remembrance,* about the gift he got from women in his life.

> "Since, one day, you came into my life, the harvest of songs has grown in my mind. Even today, they are still growing."

The woman who awakened the song in his mind in early youth departed, but her touch of sweetness blessed the whole life of the poet. She was the endless source of his songs.

A man realises the endless bliss of God in a woman. God divided Himself into two in order to realise his own sweetness in a woman.

Said the poet:

> "Oh woman, coming to me for a while
> You filled my mind with hints
> Towards that secret of bliss of
> Union with God.

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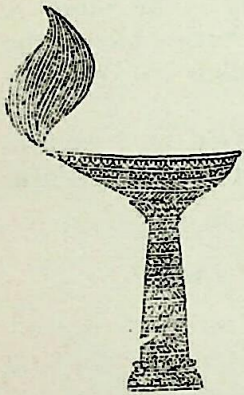
Dusan Zbavitel, *Czechoslovakia*

RABINDRANATH AND THE FOLK-LITERATURE OF BENGAL

It is a generally acknowledged and repeatedly stated fact that Rabindranath Tagore was a true pioneer in many fields of literary, social, educational and related activities. There is one domain, however, in which his merits have not yet been fully appreciated—may be because they are not so obvious at first sight, and fully to evaluate them means to go deeper into the texts of Rabindranath's writings, to trace ideas and sometimes mere allusions in them to their logical conclusions and to confront them with the latest in modern research. I refer to Tagore's conception of folk-literature, his appreciation of Bengali folk-poetry and folk-prose, and his comments on them. I would like to deal with this matter in the present paper, though only in a very short survey.



Before we start to analyse Tagore's articles touching on these themes, let us recollect that the great poet was, from his childhood, familiar with the folk-lore of his native country. In his *Chhelebela,* for instance, he confessed how greatly the early days of his life were permeated with, and influenced by the

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fairly tales and folk-tales heard at home, by the *yatras,* performances of popular folk-dramas, as well as by poems and songs sung by the servants and other people, in the big, hospitable Tagore House at Jorasanko. These were really the first literary impressions of the boy-poet, whose sensitive soul obstinately refused school lessons and book learning, but thirstily accepted all those creations of folk-fancy as well as the ancient folk-wisdom accumulated in stories and verses retold from generation to generation; their ideas and ideals, and along with them, the sweet flow, rhythm and cadence of Bengali folk-poetry, of its nursery rhymes, riddles and songs, became a part of him. It is difficult to say, now, to what extent this folk-poetry influenced Rabindranath's own creations, and it is too intricate and difficult a problem to be solved in one short article, if it can be solved at all. Let us, therefore, only recall Tagore's songs, which bear many unmistakable traces of the influence of folk-song, in their texts as well as in their melodies and musical structure. Rabindranath himself pointed this out in his article on Prof. Mansoor Uddin's collection of folk-songs, *Haramani,* in Prabasi, in 1927 : "In many of my songs, I took over the melodies from *baul*-songs. And in many others, there came of a union, consciously or unconsciously, *baul* melodies along with other tunes." And Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay wrote in his valuable biography of the poet : "Again and again we hear in Rabindranath's writings the echo of those waves which were created in a fanciful and emotional soul like that of Rabindranath, by the rhythm of the *chharas* and stories of fairy-tales. From the rhythm of these *chharas,* the boyish poet acquired his first lessons in nursery education." To sum up, we may certainly say that Rabindranath took over the best elements in Bengali folk-poetry, in the same way as he took over the best in the Indian classical heritage and in Western thought. As J. C. Ghosh put it in his *Bengali Literature* : "It was perhaps his greatest achievement as a writer to have cut a channel in which the three by no means easily reconcilable influences of ancient Indian, modern European, and popular Bengali origin could happily mingle."

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But let us turn our attention to what Rabindranath wrote on folk-poety, to his approach to, and appreciation of it, and especially to some of his comments on the subject. Most of them are to be found in his tiny book *Lokasahitya,* published for the first time in 1907. It comprises four articles —two on nursery-rhymes ('Chhelebhulano chhara,' 1 and 2), one on songs of the *Kabiwalas* ('Kabi-sangit') and one on village-literature ('Gramyasahitya'). Besides, we find some of his shorter contributions to the same subject scattered here and there, as, for instance, in the article on *Haramani* mentioned above, in his Preface to Dakshinarajan Mitra Mazumdar's famous collection of Bengali folk-tales, etc.

Folk-poetry

The first article in *Lokasahitya* is devoted to Bengali nursery rhymes and is typical of Rabindranath's approach to Bengali folk-literature. He says there: "For some time I have been collecting Bengali nursery rhymes," and makes it clear that it is mainly by their simple, natural poetic beauty that they attract him so much. They are eternal, because they are impersonal and anonymous. "It is a children's literature, born spontaneously in the soul of humanity." Analysing one of these *chharas,* the poet rightly stresses that there is no logical connection in them, that they are just a series of unconnected pictures loosely linked together. A modern poet would create a single unified and logically developed story out of them; but this is not the way of children's imagination. "The boy, sitting in the outer world, on the seashore builds houses of sand; and with the same joy he sits on the seashore of the inner world and composes houses of sand." There is no logic in it, but there are pictures— 'strange, but true, like dreams.' The nursery rhymes are like innumerable fragments of some big star; in their pictures there are scattered many portions of old folk-memories, which can no longer be put together into a whole; and yet our fancy tries to cull from them some knowledge of that forgotten ancient world. The child, however, has no inclination to historicise. For him, all is present and contemporary, all is true. And we must confess that these rhymes are neither

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true nor false, because they are above truth and falseness.

Turning to the form of these *chharas*—and here Rabindranath starts to apply this term also to other folk-songs, not only nursery rhymes—the poet discovers that they are formed mainly out of one-sentence verses, one-sentence pictures, sometimes extremely plastic and vivid, sometimes with the unusual capacity of evoking a whole story at once, and he gives convincing proofs of this artistic ability of folk-poets. These pictures have preserved in the *chharas*, 'scraps of reality' of some unknown age—events long since forgotten, as well as the pleasures and sorrows of people passed away many, many years ago, but shared by ourselves and our contemporaries, too. As an instance, Rabindranath quotes verses alluding to and depicting the departure of the mother's beloved daughter for the father-in-law's house, this eternally recurring and always equally heart-rending event of every-day Indian life. Coming from the heart of a loving mother as they do, some nursery rhymes most beautifully express the feeling of a mother's love for her child; and Rabindranath also shows how remarkably this feeling influences the language, even the very grammar, of these *chharas*.

Now for Rabindranath's first article on Bengali nursery rhymes, written as far back as 1894.

It is at once obvious from it that Rabindranath's approach to Bengali nursery rhymes, and to the folk-literature of his native country in general, is very different from the approach of most present-day folk-lorists. The latter study and analyse folk-poetry from various points of view, but rarely are they able to appreciate all its beauty, its literary qualities and merits, in short, to view it as part of the country's literature and treat it as such. This was, however, exactly what Rabindranath did in his article on nursery rhymes, as well as in his other contributions on the folk-poetry of Bengal. It attracted him for its extraordinary beauty of expression, for its quite specific *rasa*, as he aptly called it, using a term taken from traditional Sanskrit poetry. And his manner of treatment, though not based on what one would call the scientific method, was that of a critic of literature or a literary

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historian. It is a real pity that, in this domain, Rabindranath has not had many successors in Bengal, whose rich and beautiful folk-literature is deserving of much greater study and attention. The fact that Rabindranath was, in this field, a real pioneer becomes clear if we recall that he wrote his articles on folk-poetry long before Dineschandra Sen published his invaluable contributions to the same branch of Bengali literature.

It would be possible to take any part of Rabindranath's article and elaborate it into a comprehensive study, testing his conclusions by a comparison with other folk-songs which are available; his comments on child psychology, as reflected in the *chharas,* on their turn of phrase, etc. would, for instance, provide ample and rewarding material for such a study. But there is one short comment which we may look at more closely. Speaking of the form of the *chharas,* Rabindranath said: "There are pictures here of another kind, too, which, taking up the subject to be described, evoke in our mind the whole situation." This is really an extraordinary quality possessed by Bengali folk-poetry. Though also sometimes alluding to mythology, like the classical poetry of India, in most cases it selects its material from the immediate environment of village folk, reducing settings and events to their essential characteristics, which we may call 'abbreviations of reality'. They are highly eloquent in their plasticity, but can only be fully comprehended and appreciated by those who are able to create in their imagination the corresponding atmosphere or fill in the whole story, i.e. to those who had an intimate knowledge of Bengali village life, with all its sorrows and pleasures. And, as is rightly pointed out by Rabindranath, this mastery of abbreviation reaches its high point in the *chharas.*

National riches

In his second contribution to the same subject, written in 1895, Rabindranath published a delightful collection of 81 nursery rhymes, accompanying them with a short but illuminating introduction. Today they are still worth the greatest attention: "Owing to differences of taste, this

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flavour (of the *chharas*) might not please everybody, but I think there cannot be differences of opinion on this point, that it is our duty to collect and preserve these poems for ever. For they are our national wealth. They have been saved for a long time in the national treasury of our country; in them we find woven tunes of songs of love of our mothers and grandmothers, in their rhythm there resound the anklets of the childhood dances of our fathers and forefathers. In the stream of social change, many small, as well as great, things were swept away unnoticed. That is why it is high time, now, to have the old national riches carefully collected."

Rabindranath, however, put forward more than this general demand; he asked also for variants of the same songs and rhymes to be collected, rightly stressing that none of them should be overlooked or refused. Thus we can see that it was he who encouraged his countrymen to collect folk-songs; and, as we learn from Prabhat Mukhopadhyay's *Rabindra-jibani,* he did so ten years before he wrote his article, i.e. as early as about 1885. He himself collected folk-poetry—first of all *chharas,* as mentioned above, and later on songs of the popular Muslim *baul* Lalan Fakir from Kushtia. He published them in the so-called *Haramani* section of the journal *Prabasi,* which thus occupies an important place in the history of Bengali folk-lore studies.

It is generally known that these *baul* songs attracted Rabindranath for many years and, as stated above, also influenced to a great extent his own creative work. In his article on Muhammad Mansoor Uddin's collection *Haramani,* Rabindranath made a few very interesting comments on the songs of the *bauls.* He admitted that not all of them, as a matter of fact only a small number, have a high spiritual or artistic value; but he stressed their immense historical importance, as they throw many interesting sidelights on the development of India's spirit. And Rabindranath appreciated most of all the fact that they spanned the abyss of mutual religious misunderstanding and distrust between the two major communities of the India of that time, Hindus and Muslims.

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This observation, now, may be applied to the overwhelming majority of Bengali folk-poetry. Let us recollect what, for instance, Dineschandra Sen said more than once in his writings on the folk-literature of Bengal: that it was only in this folk-poetry where both Hindu and Muslim elements were mingled and blended, that the result was an unprecedented combination of charm and beauty. However unfortunate present relations and the present situation may be, the historical value of Bengali folk-poetry, in this direction, cannot be estimated highly enough.

The third article in *Lokasahitya,* written in 1895, is called 'Kabisangit' which we may translate as 'Songs of Versifiers', and deals with the verses of *Kabiwalas,* which, according to Rabindranath, occupy a place 'between old Bengali poetry and modern poetic literature'. One remark must be added here—that in this article and the next one, Rabindranath does not make any difference between folk and popular literature. But this distinction is, of course, of relatively recent date and, moreover, so far as I know, nobody has so far tried to draw that very subtle border-line between these two varieties in the literature of Bengal.

Writings of kabiwalas

In his article, Rabindranath gives a short but pithy description of the general characteristics of the writings of *Kabiwalas,* explaining, at the same time, the reasons for their appearance on the Bengali literary scene, and sketching a survey of the development of their poetry. He stresses, first of all, the historical changes which took place in India after the arrival of the British as being the main cause of important changes in literature, too. Rajas and their courtiers, who were for many centuries the chief patrons of literary production, were replaced by the common people, who made new claims and demands on those who composed poetry. It was *Kabiwalas,* then, who came forward during that time to fulfil these expectations. Rabindranath has no illusions as regards the artistic level of their poetry. On the contrary, he judges it very severely, not failing to point out all its weaknesses and all the poetic vices of the *Kabiwalas.* But it does

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not blind him to their historical importance: "The *Kabiwalas* were the first who, in modern Bengal, started to compose songs, not out of religious enthusiasm, or for the satisfaction of the raja, but only to delight common people in their leisure. This influence of common people on literature has lasted until now, but the nature of people has changed in the meantime. And along with these changes, literature has acquired depth." And he concludes: "There is no doubt that in a short time people will advance so far that we shall see established, in their leisure entertainments, too, gentle restraint, deeper truth and less easily attainable ideals."

The last part of the poet's *Lokasahitya* was written in 1899 and called 'Gramyasahitya' (Village-Literature). It falls into three parts: first Rabindranath deals with the folk-lyric in more general outline, and then he discuss two main subjects of the folk and popular poetry of Hindu Bengal—the Hara-Gauri theme and the divine love of Lord Krishna and Radha. But, throughout his article, he keeps in the foreground one of the main features of folk-poetry—its realism and deeply rooted feeling for reality, be it manifest in the song of a Padma boatman promising to bring for his beloved a sari worth a rupee, or in the many and varied vicissitudes of Shiva's married life, clearly reflecting the problems of village families. In the third subject, then, in the Radha-Krishna story, Rabindranath sees a reflection of the ideals of the village folk.

Tagore's legacy

The inner realism of Bengali folk-poetry formed a kind of basis for nearly all medieval Bengali literature, from Mangal-kabyas to Bharatchandra; and Rabindranath gives a very poetic description in this statement: "As the roots of a tree are firmly bound together with the soil and its upper part is spread towards the sky, in the same way the lower part of a literature is always hidden, being to a large extent imprisoned in the soil of its mother-country....There is a ceaseless inner connection between the lower literature and the higher one. The blossoms, fruits, twigs and sprouts of

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that part which points to the sky cannot be compared with the lower roots in the soil; and yet those who know do not in the least fail to see their similarity and affinity."

Is it a mere rhetorical figure? I think not. We may take it as the great poet's challenge to all the present creators of Bengali literature. They also need that 'ceaseless inner connection' with the soil of their mother-country; and it is no mere chance that their writings fail exactly where that connection has been interrupted. This is a practical lesson which can be read in Rabindranath's comments on folk-literature. He himself followed it; he learned to understand deeply the village life of Bengal, to identify himself with its pleasures and sorrows, as expressed in their everyday life, as well as in their everyday poetry. It is my firm belief that, without staying in the country-side for as long as he did, Rabindranath could never have become what he was, either as a man or as a poet.

It is to be hoped that the Tagore Centenary may act as a powerful impulse, producing a great blossoming of Bengali culture in all its branches, in the spirit of Rabindranath's legacy. May it include among them a country-wide harvest of literary folk-lore studies, the foundations of which were laid by no less a man than the great poet Rabindranath Tagore.

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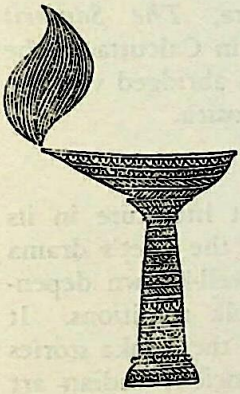
Heinz Mode, *G.D.R.*

THE KING OF THE DARK CHMBER AND ITS FOLK-LORE BACKGROUND

Rabindranath Tagore's play *Raja* in his own translation named *The King of the Dark Chamber* was written in the year 1910. It belongs to a series of plays, which have been called 'symbolical' and it thus has given much cause for speculative analysis. But there exist, written in German and published in scientific journals and felicitation volumes, several articles, which may have escaped the attention of the art critics. In the anniversary year 1961 we propose to redirect interest in their problems.



No less a scholar than Heinrich Zimmer wrote in the *ZDMG* 1929 an article on *The King of the Dark Chamber,* where he tried to derive the plot from an episode in one of the Rigvedic poems, the well-known love story of the royal Pururavas and the divine Urvasi. Heinric Meyer-Benfey in an article published in the German *Winternitz-Festschrift* 1933, refutes this opinion and replaces the source by the Buddhist birth-story, the Kusa Jataka (531), which had already been mentioned in the same connection by Zimmer. As there exist several versions

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of the Kusa Jataka, the Pali text, and the Sanskrit text of the *Mahavastu,* Meyer-Benfey believes that Tagore might have preferred the Sanskrit model, which also accounts for the choice of the names of the characters in Tagore's drama. Meyer-Benfey makes the statement, that the poet himself has confirmed the Jataka story as his source for *The King of the Dark Chamber* in a personal talk in the year 1926.

Although it is of little interest to the appreciation of Tagore's play whatever model he may have used, as certainly he created in spirit and form an entirely new version, we may find such investigations necessary to recognise the cultural-historical background of the poet's writings. It has been pointed out by scholars dealing with the collection and interpretation of Indian folk literature, especially in Bengal, that the Buddhist stories of the pre-Islamic period deeply affected the moral of folk tales and that even the Hindu mythology could not gain the same hold on these simple folk tales, as did the earthbound and non-divine Buddhist lore (compare, for example, D. C. Sen, *The Folk Literature of Bengal,* Calcutta 1920). It seems to be well known, besides, that Tagore drew from the reading of the once so important book by Rajendralala Mitra, *The Sanskrit Buddhist Literature of Nepal,* published in Calcutta in the year 1882, a book that repeatedly narrates abridged versions of the Kusa Jataka, taken from the *Mahavastu.*

Jataka stories

This pre-eminence of early Buddhist literature in its influence on later folk-lore and even on the poet's drama again may be explained by the ever so well-known dependence of Buddhist literature on older folk traditions. It has been pointed out again and again that the Jataka stories and the figurations of these stories in ancient Indian art (Bharhut, Bodh Gaya, Sanchi) reflect not so much the religious teachings of Buddhism, but rather make use of older tales, prevailing amidst the villagers and townsfolk, applying to these tales, as an afterthought, more or less well fitted Buddhist morals.

In the chronological sequence or stratification, we thus

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go back with our folk-loristic materials to a period earlier than the age of the Buddha, that means, earlier than the 6th century B.C.

If we go on with our investigation, we have to make our choice between two distinct traditions, which we find reflected in literature, as also occasionally in pictorial arts. The one tradition is embodied in the Vedic scriptures and has been well studied in India. We already noticed, that Zimmer had drawn from here his comparison with the Tagore play. But there is another less known and probably older and more influential tradition in India, which has been frequently overlooked, as its documentary evidence is available only in fragments. This second tradition consists in the common background of Western Asia and India, reaching back to the early days of Mesopotamian, Sumerian and Accadian civilisation in the beginning of the third milllenium B.C. Unfortunately on Indian soil this tradition is not available in literary sources, or better, the literary evidence of this tradition is not yet understood, for the simple reason, that the texts of the period, short lines of inscriptions on seals and earthen vessels, have so far withstood all attempts at reading and interpretation. Unread though they may be, writing did exist in these early days. And what is more, pictorial engravings on seals and paintings on vases have been discovered at the sites of this early Indian civilisation in the Indus valley, the Punjab and Saurashtra. These can be interpreted along with Mesopotamian literary and pictorial materials of the same period. We thus go back, to refer once more to our stratification, to a period well in the third millenium B.C.

Beauty and the beast

It may be asked, what is the special implication of this cultural-historical background for our poet's drama *The King of the Dark Chamber*? Can it be established on a more detailed comparison or has it to be taken as a purely theoretical speculation? And here I would answer and base my reply on the researches quoted above by H. Zimmer and H. Meyer-Benfey.

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The story of the king, keeping in the dark, asking a beautiful woman to love him without ever having seen him, no matter, if we consider the simple narrative of the Kusa Jataka, where the king is ugly and has thus to fear discovery of this fact by the woman, or if we take Tagore's deeper adaptation of the king's purposeful wish to remain unseen, only to secure the woman's unselfish and unquestioned love and devotion, this story goes back to the old folk-lore type of universal distribution called *la belle et la bête,* or the beauty and the beast. It is that story of the beautiful daughter of an unhappy father, who, wishing to save the life of the latter, becomes the wife of a hideous creature, a beast of animal type. But the daughter recognises behind the ugly exterior the noble character of the male, becomes truly attached to him and thus saves him, for he turns out to be enchanted and in reality to be a beautiful prince. Thus the good cause is victorius in the end, as is only suitable for a folk tale. It may be noticed, that the folk tale makes the woman to be the true heroine, whereas the beast-prince is only the object of her action. This character of the story has been much better kept in the Jataka, than in Tagore's play, where the unseen king is the godlike hero. We may mark this difference, though of minor importance for our investigation, to reflect the poet's concession to modern society.

Story content

In European folk tales the beast-prince can take the form of a bear, a wolf, a donkey, a snake, a pig, a frog, a bird or even a tree : it is the hidden beauty of royalty that really matters. The ugliness of prince Kusa thus fulfils the same purpose. In the *Mahavastu* the queen addresses Kusa with contempt : "I know your majesty, that you are strong and valiant. But you are ugly and hideous too. You are repulsive, though you are a mighty Lord. You are thick-lipped, thick-headed, fat and pot-bellied. I have no wish to see you. So do not weary yourself." It is the king, who goes down on his knees for his love of the beautiful woman. "You love me well, O dark lady of the fine hips and slender

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waist, and because of my love for you I shall not yearn for my great kingdom. I will not go away, O deep-bosomed lady, though I know what land I came from. I roam the world like one distraught. I am mad with love, O lady of the fawn-like gentle eyes." (The *Mahavastu,* Vol. III, transl. by J. J. Jones, London 1956, pp. 16, 18).

There are a number of Indian variants of the *belle et la bête* story. One may recall the 'enchanted young Brahmin' of the *Panchatantra,* the 'woodcutter's daughter' of Somadeva's *Kathasaritsagara,* or the 'ruby-prince' of Steel-Temple's collection.

As for the story's accent on the heroine, we may mention that the Pali version of the Kusa Jataka gives an interesting explanation for the Buddha's willingness to tell this episode of a former birth. The Buddha told the story to a monk, who wanted to leave the Sangha, as he had lifted his eyes to look at a beautiful woman, thus longing for a secular life. The Buddha, by telling the Kusa story, wanted to convince this monk that such longing means suffering. But as a matter of fact, in the case of this story, Kusa's longing is rewarded, and thus we can realise in what superficial manner the Buddihist moral is added to the story, not really included.

Feminine aspect

Thus we may take it for granted, that it is just this feminine aspect which makes the story seem old and we now can introduce a second story treating the subject of feminine attraction to a beast-like creature. In his article on *The King of the Dark Chamber* Meyer-Benfey draws attention to the fact that Tagore has used the story of Rsyasringa in the last part of his *Lover's Gift.* With this comparison Meyer-Benfey intended to parallel the dependence of the author on older stories and to point out his peculiar way of adaptation of such sources. But there is much more in this comparison. For as we may notice immediately, the Rsyasringa story contains as main figures the beautiful woman and the ugly man, in this case an uncivilised ascetic, borne by an animal mother and characterised by one or two horns. But the plot and the moral of the Rsyasringa

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story is different. Here the wily woman attracts the chaste ascetic by deliberate effort only to lure him away from his forest loneliness into the civilised but vicious settings of town life. The woman actually does not liberate the man, as in the *belle et la bête* story, but ruins him. The German Indologist Heinrich Lüders has compared the different versions of the Rsyasringa story in two articles in the *Nachrichten der Königl. Gesellschaft d. Wissenschaft,* Göttingen, 1897 and 1902. The story is found in the Mahabharata and in the Ramayana, in the *Padmapurana* and the *Skandapurana,* in the *Mahavastu,* the Jatakas, in Hemachandra's *Parisistaparvan,* Ksemendra's *Avadanakalpalata* and in Dandin's *Dasakumaracharita.* We are here not concerned with a detailed comparison of these versions, as they are, taken as a whole, comparatively late literary evidence, of a theme, known to be one of the oldest stories of Asiatic literature. This oldest evidence is supplied by the Sumero-Accadian epic of Gilgamesh. In this Mesopotamian version the half-man, half-animal Enkidu is drawn from his forest abode and his animal companions by a skilful prostitute sent for the purpose. Again we need not go into details. Suffice it to say that some of the scenes, depicted on Indus valley seals and thus in age close to the Gilgamesh epoch, may illustrate our story. There is a bull on a Chanhu Daro seal, stepping over a woman, lying on her back below the animal, and if we rightly recognise in this document the original animal background of our story, we can at the same time point out that the Vedic *Ashvamedha,* with its ritual cohabitation, goes back to an older bull ritual, which may well belong to our period. In the Indus valley material we find numerous illustrations of an animal depicted as a unicorn, and although this has been explained to be a two-horned bull seen in a pure side view, the horns covering each other, the fact remains, that the animal actually seen on the seals shows just one horn and may have been named unicorn. Rsyasringa, or Ekasringa, the one-horned ascetic answers to the same description. Mediaeval Christian and Islamic literature and art bear testimony that the lore of an animal called unicorn was not forgotten and there is even

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a special saying that a unicorn can only be tamed by a virgin, thus stressing the unicorn's connection with the female sex.

Moral for men

The male moral of man's ruin by a vile woman is best known from the story of Aristoteles and Phyllis, where the woman uses her learned but love-drunken partner as a vehicle, riding on his back, and it is interesting to note that this episode is also reflected in Indian literature. We mention only the story of King Nanda and Vararuchi in the *Panchatantra* and a short notice of the Chinese pilgrim Hiouen Tsang, who reports of his travels: "By the side of it is a stupa built by Asoka Raja. This is the place which in old times was occupied by Ekasringa Rishi. This Rishi being deceived by a pleasure woman, lost his spiritual faculties. The woman, mounting his shoulders, returned to the city." (Beal, *Hiouen Tsang*, Vol. II, 162). There can be no doubt, that some version of the Rsyasringa story contained this particular episode.

If we now consider both the stories, *la belle et la bête* and Rsyasringa, the plot of this type of narratives can be fixed in its chronological position, or rather in its relative position by the socio-political moral implied, even without using the historical material quoted above. For we already know from archaeological and reflecting literary and linguistic evidence, that at a certain period of social evolution, the women have played an important if not a dominant role in society. As this evidence points to the pre-civilised period of early peasant communities and as we recognise in the succeeding periods of city and state civilisations a clear domination of the male sex, we might attempt to place the origin of our particular type of stories within this period of historical development.

Anti-feminine moral

The anti-feminine moral, which is very explicit in the Mesopotamian version of our story, well agrees with the firm establishment of patriarchal society in the Near East early in the third millenium B.C. In India, on the other hand,

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although the type of story exists in both variants, as we have seen, its moral is less firmly expressed and the role of the feminine part excused and sometimes even glorified. This only confirms other observations, which point to strong survivals of matriarchal society in India into later historical periods. Even the early city-states of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa degenerated and the society fell back to pre-state conditions in the post-Harappan period, until at a much later period, in late Vedic and early Buddhist times, we can witness the re-establishment of cities and smaller territorial states, again under a firm patriarchal aspect. But the change of progressive and regressive periods in early India seems to have led to a peculiar development of folk literature, with its outspoken ideals of feminine moral superiority, only superficially hidden under the intentional covering of religious teachings, declaring the woman to be a source of evil influence on the male's straight road to salvation. Such religious Buddhist and Hindu morals have not really affected the older moral of pre-Aryan days, which is so pre-eminent in the prevailing folk literature where women are the heroines. Some of the finest works of Indian art and some of the greatest characters even of classical Buddhist and Hindu literature confirm this observation. For it is by the names of such women as Sakuntala and Vasantasena that Indian literature has begun its victorious conquest of the West, and even now it is the beauty of mediaeval feminine appearance in Indian sculpture that has won a unique victory over Western puritanism in the full recognition of the merits of Indian art.

Even Tagore's adaptation of an old folk story, his glorification of the human aspects of male rule and spiritual kingdom, or, as it has been expressed: of "God trying to fulfil himself in creation," even this change of accent and moral in symbolical guise cannot hide the inner weight of the woman—heroine of his play. It is really the Queen Sudarshana, who has our sympathy, who in her elementary humanity is nearest to us in sinful action and righteousness alike.

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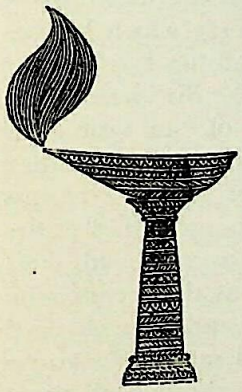
V. Sitaramiah

TAGORE'S LITERAY CRITICISM

Rabindranath Tagore is not a mere poet or man of letters. He is a whole literature. What he did in so many fields made a difference for Bengali in the realm of things. Even as his personality was unique, and distinguished anywhere,—full, rich, varied, with courage and firmness and luminousness of soul—his influence and achievement were a contribution to India's prestige. They quickened life and thought and modes of expression all about him. I speak today of an aspect or two of his literary criticism.



Literary criticism was not one of his chief claims to recognition. But it is quite characteristic of him. Indeed it is an *alter* aspect of his poetry. And he is poet in his criticism as well; and to some it might appear as much a strength as a limitation. He had a high sense of purpose in all that he did. With his imaginative genius, his fundamental perceptions and sense of values his utterance was always on the heights. In many an essay he contributed to *Bharati, Parichaya, Sadhana, Kavita, Pravasi, Bangadarsan, Modern Review*

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and the *Visva Bharati* etc., he has written extensively on the nature and function of literature and criticism and commented on points connected with life, nature, the beyond, truth, beauty and joy, culture and tradition and aspiration. All get their due need and correlation; but the essentially human reference in literature is the point always stressed. What he wants literature to do and be, how he himself functions, are naturally his own preference patterns supplying for us his scales of values and standards of judgment.

It is lucky that poets like Dante, Coleridge, Goethe, Arnold and Eliot are good critics as well. There is advantage in a great practitioner talking on the nature of his craft. A poet-critic is likely to give us better insight and sounder discriminations than an outsider howsoever erudite he be.

Types of work

Tagore distinguishes between two types of work: the one in poetic creation and the other in the levels of sensing values. And these define him as much as they mark his graduations. Some works give us the story of a poet (*Kavikatha*), the others the story of a great tradition (*Brhat sampradayer katha*). It is not difficult to see which he considers the greater. This distinction establishes for him the superiority of Valmiki over Kalidasa. The distinction here is one of basic values; it is a consideration of total vision and the quality of beauty embodied in a work as distinguished from considerations of technique, i.e. the formal elements like diction, *alamkara,* style, prosody etc., which are the instrumentalities. The latter are shown as valid only (*tar gaurav tar antarika sarthakatay*) in so far as they render the *soundarya-sambandha* with which a poem and poet set up a 1000 bridges between man and man, and man and nature, and man and God making the world kin through all time. Many beautiful discriminations are made between *buddhi* and *pratibha,* between *vastava* and *satya,* between, the *kusala* and *mangala.* One great *ananda* pervades from the speck of dust to the stars; and, the grasping of this truth heartfully is the task of the poet. *Ananda rupam amrtam vibhati* is as true here as for the Upanisadic seer. *Sahtiya*

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is not created with *kalakausala* only though that is needed; it is *hrdayer aviskara.* The achievement of a *paraspara sambandha,* an *atmiyata,* a *samanjasya,* an *aikya* between all elements in life and nature beautifully is the task he commends.

At a lower point he could take up a line of what he calls the *namuna of spasta kavita*

Duhkhakaro avadhan, duhkhakaro avadhan,
Amani kavar garta dekho vidyaman

and asks among many things *ihar madhye kavya rasa kothay?* where is the *kavir asrujal?* or, compares a piece of *vakcaturi* in say, *carana nakhare das cand kande*— and asks where is the *jivana svad* such as you find in a couplet like

Janam avadhi ham rup neharanu
nayan na tirapita bhela
Lakha lakha yug hiye hiye rakhanu
tavu hiye judana na gela.

Literary comparisons

He considers what scholars by a fiat of their *alamkara sastra* call the *Mahakavyas,* e.g., *Raghuvamsa,* Magha, Bharavi, the *Paradise Lost* etc., and concludes that they are more the wealth of libraries than creative inheritance of high value. Speaking of literary comparisons he says that Kandarpa should not be compared with Falstaff but that literature can afford to miss Kandarpa while it cannot afford to miss Falstaff or Lady Macbeth; The dry (*suska*) and artificial (*krtaka*) such as even in the description of the Himalayas in *Kumarasambhava* tire him while *sakhiparivrta Sakuntala* is *cirakaler* and the whole world of relations that later builds up with Dusmanta has the quality of eternal humanity in it.

Valuations by realism or modernity also do not weigh with him. It is not the correspondence with the facts of everyday life that makes for *kavyasatya.* To him what is merely *navya* can be just rebellion—*vidroha—Purvavarti puratanke uddhata bhave upeksha* and *prativad;* often a

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spardha matra; a *kshanikatar lakhsan,* rather than evidence of substantive value.

Many of us usually take up with aspects and parts only of a piece of work and proceed too nicely in awarding praise and blame, e.g. the similes of Kalidasa are good; his diction is clear and racy (*sarasa*); the 3rd *sarga* in the *Kumarasambhava* has beautiful description; the 4th Act of *Sakuntala* depicts *karuna* magnificently. But is that all there is to it? The whole paragraph dealing with it in *Sahityasristi* is valuable. There is a more advanced point in *Sahityer Gaurav*: A moving comparison is made when he holds up to view the Saga of a whole people in the works of the Hungarian Maurus Jokai whose *Eyes like the Sea* and Besi's basic human quality are expounded for worth. So too the *Yehudi* by the Polish writer, Kraszewski where reader and writer are participants as it were, in the work. A *jivanasrota,* a whole *karampravaha* are in such works presented. The contrasts in the poverty of our experience as reflected in contemporary Indian work make rather sad reading. These are hard words but seem to be true as much today as when he wrote them. Such observations are seminal and can inform and direct both creation and criticism.

Historical influences

When he speaks of the greatness of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and of Homer's *Iliad* he warms up to the themes. Ramayana specially he takes up again and again as expressive of the special genius of our people and representing the ideals and attitude-preferences of our people throughout the ages. But tracing the history of the Ramayana in Bengal he arrives at *Meghanadvadha* where he is brought face to face with a dissonance which is hard for him to stomach. Of course we cannot escape the historical influence and impacts; haven't we assimilated the Semitic Muslim influence in dress, food, courtesies, arts and crafts? But the impact should not overwhelm or destroy our essential being. The impact of the European indirectly and of the English directly in work like *Meghanadvadha* tends to disintegrate all the cherished ideas and ideals of India. A

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viparita prakrti enters into such work upsetting all our dearest values mocking at them and essaying to supersede them. When at the end of the work he sees the poet sighing deeply in total sympathy with such a wicked destroyer he cannot help saying that *Kavyalaksmi bidaykale, nijer asrusikta malakhani taharai galay padayiya dila.* In *Manasasrti—tahar kata rup, kata rat katai vichitra gati.*

Europe has made strange weapons, flourishes rare wealth and *parthiva mahima,* offers dazzling temptation, grants freedoms and excitements but they are alien to the spirit of India. When the West comes down on our heads with its '*vidyutkhacita vajra*' shall we raise our hands in praise and not try to salvage what of ourselves we should? If it is to be surrender and imitation all along the line we as a people are finished. We may not be able to escape the contacts; let them stir and quicken us; we shall wring them for beneficence. The integrity of our culture is in question. This question abides with us; for we seem to be more deeply in now than ever; far more gone fatefully in every department of life; and in the world of culture and ideas anarchy, helplessness and bewilderment seem to prevail. His warning is apt: *Asa kariyo na; visvas kariyo na; keval pariksha karo;* and if you should desire what shall it be *Apnake chai, chai apnar saktike.*

Task of criticism

When in 1927 he was called upon to arbitrate in a controversy with the Dacca Progressives he was as positive: Dr. Sukumar Sen gives this rendering of Tagore's award: "The creation of new forms is the main purpose of literary art; and the content—be it imported, adulterated, traditional or original—matters only so far as it helps in the creation of new form. He analysed the modernness of the contemporary European literature and denied its validity for the contemporary literature of Bengal."

Tagore's *Pancabhut* is a unique piece of writing; where the 5 elements, presented as 3 gentlemen and 2 ladies, agree to write and compare their diary records and discuss delight-

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fully all the vital subjects in literature, aesthetics, culture and ethics : in its way the whole field of criticism.

The task of a literary critic of the stature of Tagore is at its best when engaged in the interpretation of masterpieces. We get some of it in his *Pracina Sahitya* essays. One may not be happy at the comparison of Sakuntala say with Miranda or Desdemona, though even here we get some illumination, but that with Uma glows with rare insight. We know that such discrimination has gone into the making of his own Citrangada. His partiality for *Meghaduta,* on which he writes many poems, recreates for us not only the beneficent *Asadhamegh* but the Yaksa heart and mood. There is no finer analysis than his exposition of Kadambari and incidental fun on our practitioners of music. But one is never the same again after reading his note on the hard fates of Urmila and Patralekha in his 'Kavyer Upekshita.' This is creative interpretation and comment at their best.

Many moods

In the addresses, essays, prefaces, reviews, letters—like those to Lokendranath Palit—poems like *Samayhara* we find many an observation which show him as defender, guide and seer and conscience-keeper of India's cultural health; and, so many moods and levels are on view.

What struck me as unusual when I first met it, was his frank, honest self-criticism : here is a passage in his Reminiscences :

> "When I blush to read these effusions of my boyhood I am also struck with the fear that very possibly in my later writings the same distortion wrought by straining after effect lurks in a less obvious form. The loudness of my voice, I doubt not, often drowns the thing I would say, some day or other Time will find me out."

A lesser person would not confess to a weakness like this. Valmiki describes his Rama as '*Svadosa paradosa vid*'. If to see ourselves as others see us be a gift this gift to look into ourselves and confessing to a fault is at least as great a gift.

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An *ananda,* I said, is felt by the poet as pervading the universe with tenderness for all. The poet feels it with mystic rapture and longing; and like the caressing fingers of his own mother as they play on his face. Such tenderness he feels about his stories and sketches, one of his finest contributions to literature. Here one can also see the joy of attaining the infinite in the finite. I now quote a short passage from his 'Varsayapan' (in *Sonar Tari*). That poem gives us not only a picture of his own haunted mind but his impulse to and object in creation.

Iccha kare avirata apanar manomata galpa likhi ekekti kare.
Chota pran, chota vyatha chota chota duhkakatha nitantai sahaj saral.
Sahasra vismrtirasi pratyaha yeteche bhasi tari du-cariti asrujal.
Nahi varnanar chata ghatanar ghanaghata nahi tattva, nhi upades.
Antare atrpti rabe, sanga kari mane habe ses haye haila na ses.

* * *

Sei sab helaphela nimiser lilakhela cari dike kari stupakar
Tai diye kari srsti ekti vismrtivrsti jivaner sravannisar.

Criticism, it is said, establishes contact; it is understanding and sympathy, exposition and comment, appreciation and enjoyment; it is comparison and illumination; it is, sometimes, ranking where a scale of preference is on view in terms of substance, manner and taste. But such going into genesis, i.e., to the moment of inspiration and presenting creativity in exercise is what only a poet of Tagore's quality can achieve.

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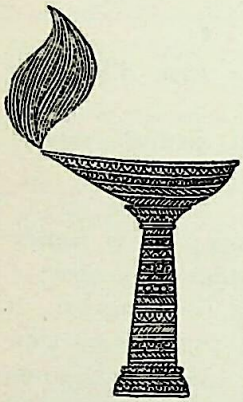
Martin C. Carroll, *U.S.A.*

AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY TO AMERICA

"The Western statesmen who are called upon to formulate a Far Eastern policy ought to be required to take an examination in Tagore's Sadhana and The King of the Dark Chamber."

So commented knowledgeable Hamilton W. Mabie, approaching seventy years of age with a notable record behind him as literary critic, historian and associate editor of a distinguished weekly, *The Outlook,* when he was penning the introduction to Basanta K. Roy's biographical study, *Rabindranath Tagore—the Man and His Poetry.*



The place was New York and the time was 1915. Only three years had elapsed since the first publication in the Western world by the Chicago magazine, *Poetry,* of selections from Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali.* In that brief period the poet had vaulted from being a legend in his own country to the prospects of becoming a legend to the entire world.

It was not simply that he had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in November, 1913 and a knighthood in June, 1915. Even before these events he was known in the United States as

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lecturer, poet, essayist, philosopher, educator and to not a few as a warm-hearted, inspiring friend. Five months after the 1912 publication of his poems in *Poetry* there had appeared in *The North American Review* an article by May Sinclair, who had been present at artist William Rothenstein's Hampstead house the evening of July 7, 1912, when Yeats' reading had introduced Tagore's work to the English-speaking world. The article was widely read, communicating the sweeping intensity of the judgment she expressed to Tagore: "You have put into English which is absolutely transparent in its perfection things it is despaired of ever seeing written in English at all or in any Western language."

It was as if a great wall between the West and the East had suddenly fallen. Where before silence prevailed, lines of communications had opened, humming with words and new ideas.

What were some of these lines of communications? During 1913 and 1914 there were published in American periodicals an average of four articles each month on Tagore. He was honoured and discussed as the lyrical voice of Bengal, the soul of Bengal, the modern Bengali mystic, the Hindu of the Celtic Spirit. In 1915 two biographical studies appeared, one mentioned above, the other by Ernest Rhys. During the same period the American image of Tagore the poet came into progressively sharper focus as his verse collections, *Gitanjali, The Gardener,* and *The Crescent Moon: Child Poems* appeared in 1913, followed by *Songs of Kabir* in 1915 and *Fruit-Gathering* in 1916. Those who had already heard his 1912 lectures at Harvard University and others who knew of his reputation as a speaker and essayist could in 1913 read his discourses published in *Sadhana—the Realization of life.* His versatility as a dramatist was substantiated with the publication in 1914 of *The King of the Dark Chamber, The Post Office* and *Chitra* and as a short story writer in 1916 by *Hungry Stones and Other Stories.* It was like a great confluence of rushing waters and murmuring peoples:

"On the seashore of endless worlds
children meet . . . .

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On the seashore of endless world is the
great meeting of children."

Many of these children would have better understood Tagore if they had known of his first visit to the United States. This had occurred in October, 1912, in the company of his son, Rathindranath and his daugter-in-law, Pratima. The three of them settled down unobtrusively in a modest house at Urbana, Illinois, where Rathindranath, who had studied agriculture and animal husbandry there from 1906 to 1909, proposed somewhat tentatively to obtain his doctorate.

A life more different from the one they had been living since June in London could hardly be imagined: while the son began work at the University and the young wife attempted to organise their home the poet worked long and quietly on the manuscript of *Sadhana.* They had a few good friends and for Tagore there was the fascination of the quiet college town of Urbana and of the countryside so unlike his beloved Bengal yet so peaceful: "Oh! the sunshine, the beautiful sunshine even when the thermometer goes below zero, and the reflection of the sun's rays on the white snow. I love it all . . . ."

Though this tranquil idyll was not to last, nevertheless, it and immediately subsequent events shaped permanently the pattern of the personal relationship between Tagore and the United States. For almost three months he was a private resident in the very heart land of America. When the call was heard to leave Urbana it came from sympathetic interested associates: to lecture at Rochester, New York for the Federation of Religious Liberals; to visit Chicago as the guest of Mrs. William Waughan Moody, widow of the American poet; to be hosted there by Harriet Monroe, editor of *Poetry,* a few weeks after his poems had appeared in that publication; to give a series of lectures at Harvard University and in New York City.

In early April the Tagore family sailed for England and subsequently for India which they reached in early September. Two months later the Nobel Prize for Literature was his. "I shall never get any peace again. I shall be worried

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with appeals, all kinds of people will be writing to me. My heart sank . . . ."

Never again might he have, except in the quiet of Santiniketan, the privacy he had relished at Urbana. The life he led there introduced him intimately to Americans not as a visitor nor a stranger but as a member of the family. It was a role he never relinquished; its prerogatives he exercised in all future relationships with the United States.

On the seashore of endless worlds the Nobel Prize announcement broke in a surging wave. Now that the wave has well receded, we who celebrate Tagore's centenary almost a half century later, can clearly discern other forces and facts of which yesterday's children were unaware. How could they know that Tagore was not the inspired beginning but rather the long-awaited, hard fought for climax? How many of them were familiar with or indeed had even heard of the Vedas and Upanishads? How could those only dimly aware of the identity and work of Kalidasa and Kautilya be expected to have heard of the Renaissance, comparable to that in 15th century Europe, which had taken place in Bengal during the 19th century? Names like Henry Derozio, Iswar Gupta, Madhusudhan Datta, Bankimchandra Chattopadhya, Ram Mohun Roy had been heard only in a rare handful of American communities. That in Bengal had been created a full-fledged, prideful literature, essentialy Indian in character and language but Western in form and technique could not have been suspected—until perhaps the presses began to roll off what seemed an endless stream of more than forty books of all *genres* written in English by Tagore. Even now the riches of his works produced in Bengali, estimated at about 50 dramas, 100 books of verse containing more than 3,000 poems, about 40 works of fiction, almost 1,400 songs and 15 books of literary, political and religious essays, remain largely unmined.

The poet, then sprang full-blown as a rare and rich phenomenon into the consciousness of the American people. Newspapers in all parts of the country carried wire reports or feature stories on him and his work. One of the first of these in *The New York Times* pointed out his similarity

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to Walt Whitman and characterised his writings in terms of their "singular beauty, strong and delicate, and carved to the minute perfection of an ivory relief." The poet's religious verse immediately found favour in many circles; in American homes its place was next to the Bible and family manuals of religious devotion. Outside the home a popular topic of discussion for local literary societies and community clubs was Tagore's works. The stage was being set for the poet's return to the United States.

This occurred almost immediately. For five months from September, 1916, to January, 1917, he toured the country, lecturing or giving readings of his works from the west coast to the east.

The time was an unsettled one—three months after his departure the United States was involved in World War I. One of the main purposes of Tagore's visit was to earn by lecture fees and to collect from interested parties sufficient funds to make solvent his school at Santiniketan. As a confident member of the American family, however, and a distinguished member at that, he did not hesitate under such circumstances and in such distraught times to praise or blame as he saw fit. As one commentator from San Francisco, Bailey Millard, explained in the November, 1916 issue of *The Bookman*:

> "In fact it was plain from the day of his arrival in this country that our turbulent nation . . . had in Tagore not only an unappreciative observer but an unsparing critics. In his mild, ascetic way, but with deep conviction, he charges us with blind indifference to spiritual things. He accuses us of bowing down before the false god of 'that dominant intellectual abstraction which you call a nation,' and stigmatises our political system. . . ."

Serious charges indeed. Yet Americans were psychologically incapable of recoiling in righteous self-defence; with the next stroke of his pen Bailey Millard writes:

> "A gentler soul than that of Tagore one might search the world over and fail to find and yet one feels, even at a first meeting, that here is a potential force

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and one does not wonder that it has swayed India and has reached across the seas to us. . . ."

All men stand in constant need of being refreshed or of refreshing themselves from the many fountain heads of God. So deep is our need that habitually we shamefacedly admit poverty of spirit. In the retrospect of almost half a century, however, we may be permitted to wonder, as Bailey Millard did not, whether Tagore gravely erred in estimating the spiritual gravity and resources of the American people. What did he know, we may wonder, of the spiritual vigour of the men who founded the American republic, of the rich tradition, living, expanding, adapting, capable equally of action and tranquillity, which has developed from them? The unfortunate ignorance of Tagore's background under which America laboured seems to have been matched by an equal lapse on his part, the telling difference being, however, that the match is one against millions. Yet men of Tagore's stature are few and precious, the bell-weathers of the world, to whom in his case may perhaps be traced in part the inability of India and even of the entire East to weigh justly the deep spiritual resources of the American people.

Yet if there was much he blamed there was even more he praised. The accolades, fittingly for a poet, were given first to other poets; to Whitman: "To me his is the highest name. . . . Through his work I know your country and I catch its heart-beat." Next came Emerson: "In his work one finds much that is of India. In truth he made the teachings of our spiritual leaders and philosophers a part of his life." He could not be expected to speak about or perhaps even to know of the agony of Emerson's self-allotted pilgrimage, the refining of his spirit, terrifying, poignant, inexpressible unless expressed by Tagore himself:

> "When I go from hence let this be my parting word that what I have seen is unsurpassable. . . . My whole body and my limbs have thrilled with his touch who is beyond touch, and if the end comes here, let it come—let this be my parting word."

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Less than a month later Tagore was in New York. His visit there was reported by the editor of *The Outlook*, Lyman Abbott. The opening words reveal the distance travelled by the world in the four years since Tagore's works had first become known in the West.

> "The West can never duplicate the East nor the East the West. . . . Why should they? There is room on God's earth for both. . . . But they can try to understand each other and they can respect each other, and each can learn something from the other."

In this pattern of mutually respectful exchange Tagore led the way. On arriving in New York he had stated: "America has the figure of youth and all that is best in Western civilisation will eventually find lodgment here." The key-word here is 'eventually.' The poet reserved his right of judgment and exercised it, again as a member of the American family, during subsequent visits to the United States. Three more of these occurred, from the autumn of 1920 to the spring of 1921, again briefly in the spring of 1929, and finally in the closing months of 1930. To the very end he challenged the American people to achieve that greatness of spirit which he felt was in accord with what he knew of the country's history and what he anticipated of its future. In the course of his last stay he was received by President Hoover at the White House in a visit which he described as "a delightful one and one that will live in my memory." His last public appearance was in New York during a programme given at the Broadway Theatre, featuring a joint presentation of poetry and dance by Tagore and by the illustrious American dancer, Ruth St. Denis. In the final number Tagore was surrounded on the stage by groups of dancers, most of them children, who garlanded him in the traditional Indian fashion.

The question may justly be asked of any ambassador: have you well and truly represented the interests of your country, supported and fostered them in the trust which has been committed to you by your government and people?

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As ambassador extraordinary to the American people, Rabindranath Tagore so acted over a period of almost twenty years that he well and nobly fulfilled the mandate he had assumed after the world was made conscious through the Nobel Prize award of all he represented.

Yet there is another question which each ambassador will want to ask of himself: have I in the execution of my accepted position and duties permitted no violence to be done to my innermost, hard-earned convictions, to myself as an individual playing my brief but vital role on the diplomatic stage? The full story of Tagore's unofficial ambassadorship to the United States at every turn reveals the habitual integrity of his high purpose, the unerring individualness of his judgments, the resiliency of his reactions and the final capacity for synthesis. The latter at length amounted almost to a sense of prophecy. It reached its culminating expression after he had finished his five odysseys in the United States and, back home at Santiniketan in 1931, ten years before his death, addressed, signed and delivered to his American family a testament to all its members:

> "Spiritual ends of life are pursued with a keenness in America not found anywhere else in the modern world....the production of wealth instead of hampering her inner vision has emancipated.... a creative democracy....the freedom of human spirit. .... This spiritual adventure .... will find every renewing avenues of self-expression .... will exploit her material resources for the well-being of humanity, conquering disease .... and offer .... benefits which will spread far beyond her geographical limits. The quest of spiritual realisation which distinguishes America today .... is sure to reveal itself in a new civilisation in which Europe will be reborn, freed of its discordant inhibitions and heritages of dead past .... the vitality of a forward marching idealism will find its perfection assimilating the true gifts of the East as well as the West in the unity of the human spirit."

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If these high hopes are fulfilled—the time is now and the fulfilment already appears—the peoples of the world may one day make pilgrimage to America's heart land in Urbana, Illinois, where Tagore first began to understand in 1912 the different thing that is America.

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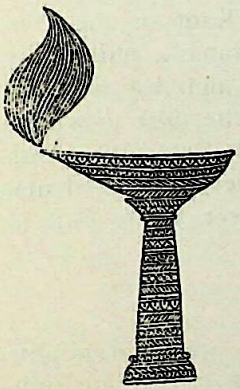
V. S. Naravane

RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND THE MIDDLE PATH IN PHILOSOPHY

One often hears the remark that in India creative philosophical thought stopped with the Middle Ages. We may not say it openly, but many of us do somehow imagine that Indian philosophy gradually ceased to be fruitful after the time of Ramanuja in the eleventh century; that when the last classical system of Vedanta had been formulated, the Indian philosopher had nothing more to do; he put up the shutters and went home; and that he has been slumbering ever since.



This belief is rooted in a specific attitude regarding the nature and meaning of philosophy. As a reaction against the nebulous and confusing jumble of 'world views' and 'ways of life' that was for several decades served to us in the name of philosophy, many of us have gone to the other extreme. We have now become stern judges of the shortcomings of philosophy. We apportion praise or blame strictly with reference to logical consistency and the requirements of system-building. We deny the title of philosopher to any thinker who digresses from the straight and narrow

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path of metaphysical cogency. And from this point of view it can be conceded that the record of Indian thought in recent years is not impressive.

But there is another and a more opulent concept of philosophy, according to which all is not lost if a thinker fails to analyse 'forms of judgment' or to classify the 'categories of Being'. According to this elastic concept, one must not look upon philosophical thinking in its shrivelled abstractness, its cold, forbidding formality. Among those who have adopted and developed this resilient approach in the modern age, the name of Rabindranath Tagore stands pre-eminent.

Rabindranath visualised philosophy as clothed in the rich hues of life and nourished by the sustenance that experience brings. To him philosophy did not represent a system of specialised, discursive processes. In his conception of philosophy there was room for the urbanity of Montaigne, the passion of Rousseau, the serenity of Goethe, the exuberance of the Vaishnava poets, the compassion of Buddha and the humanity of Jesus no less that the 'categories' of Aristotle, the 'antinomies' of Kant or the 'dialectical moments' of Hegel. To Rabindranath, philosophy was the highest music—the music that includes all overtones. It was the quest for significance, the urge to wholeness, the yearning to see things in the light of eternity. And, such being his estimate, he did not believe that Vedanta, having said the last word on every subject, wrote *finis* to the book of Indian Philosophy.

Vision of reality

Rabindranath's own contribution to philosophic thought must be understood in the light of this attitude that he had consciously adopted. It is true that he did put forward a number of philosophical ideas that are significant in their own right. His conception of 'Jivandevata', his interpretation of flux, his bold attempt to define the Infinite in terms of humanity, his original approach to the problem of the relationship of Spirit and Nature, and his strikingly

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new explanation of Immortality will occupy students of philosophy for a long time to come. Nevertheless his most important success does not lie in the elaboration of any particular theory, even concerning the subjects mentioned above. In Radhakrishnan's words, Rabindranath's philosophic essays contain "a sigh of the soul rather than a reasoned account of metaphysics, an atmosphere rather than a system of philosophy," although "we feel that the atmosphere is charged with a particular vision of Reality." He is best remembered as the supreme reconciler of our age, as a great synthesiser of different standpoints. Since the days of Ram Mohun Roy no one in India had attempted so vast an integration of the best in every intellectual movement.

Mediation and reconciliation have been the watch-words of Indian thought in every creative epoch of our history. Rabindranath himself has drawn attention to this fact in many of his essays. In *Bharatvarshe Itihaser Dhara* he has given a brilliant exposition of the unity of opposites revealed in Indian history. He has described how the Aryan and the non-Aryan, the Brahmin and the Kshatriya, the Saiva and the Vaishnava, the Monist and the Dualist have contributed to the rhythm of Indian thought and culture. Our thought, he has shown, has not been the product of a single energy shooting in one direction like a sharp straight line. It has rather been the result of the interpenetration of many energies constituting an elegant, well-rounded circle. In another essay, *Bharatpathik Ram Mohun Roy,* Rabindranath has shown that this complex process of fusion is not confined to ancient or medieval times; that the new cultural upsurge in modern India is also rooted in it, and that our best guarantee for the future lies in holding fast to this assimilative tradition bequeathed to us by our history. In his own philosophic work we find how rich, diverse, and aesthetically satisfying can be the results of the creative development of this tradition. And one might add that in the philosophy of Radhakrishnan we see the systematic working out of that broad principle of synthesis which Rabindranath expressed in his art and thought for more than half a century.

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Path of accommodation

It is sometimes imagined that a philosophy of accommodation is only the result of uncertainly and timid reluctance to take the plunge in any direction. But this is a negative and one-sided estimate of the point of view which Rabindranath represented. Such a negative interpretation was once placed upon the teachings of the Buddha. Significantly, Rabindranath was himself among the first to correct the impression that the *Madhyam marga* was nothing but an avoidance of extremes. A philosophy of retreat, of escape, of evading two opposite types of evils, can never bring enduring satisfaction to the human spirit. It can only be a makeshift arrangement. The Middle Path is a positive path of absorbing the best in everything, not the negative path of abjuring what is unsatisfactory in every camp. On this path breezes blow from every direction and their perfumes blend. This path is lined on both sides by trees which shower blossoms and fruit upon it. It was this Middle Path which Rabindranath elected to tread.

It must be remembered that Rabindranath's philosophy is the philosophy of a poet. The idea of harmony in the midst of discord, unity at the root of multiplicity, did not receive from him mere intellectual approval. It was absorbed by him and transformed into the life-blood of all that he created. At the same time it must not be imagined that this idea of harmony worked only unconsciously in his mind and heart. It can be emphatically asserted that the poet had pondered well over the intellectual implications of this philosophy. In many of his essays, and in some of his poems, we find him expressing his conviction on this point quite clearly and directly. There is, for instance, the famous poem beginning with line: *'Dhoop apanare milaite chahe gandhe'*. It is so apposite that I should like to quite it here:

> "The incense craves to cling to its own perfume,
> The perfume wants to remain within the incense;
> Tune longs to hold on to Metre
> And Metre strives to rush back into the
> arms of Tune;

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Feeling seeks to embody itself in Form,
And Form abandons itself to Feeling;
The Infinite craves for the Finite's close
comradeship,
While the Finite desires to lose itself
in the Infinite.
In creation and dissolution, through some
myterious contrivance,
There is eternal coming-and-going between
Form and Feeling:
Bondage is in search of its own Freedom,
And Freedom begs for a dwelling-place
within Bondage."

In these lines we have a summing-up of all that is vital in Rabindranath's metaphysical and ethical outlook. This mediating quality of his thought is sometimes conveyed not directly, as in the lines just quoted, but symbolically. A good example of this is the poem *Pravahini*. The poet has taken the age-old symbol of the river. Here are the concluding lines of the poem in which the river describes its own career:

"A stream of darkness fills my heart,
A stream of light my eyes;
My dance belongs to the mortal earth,
My songs to heaven rise.
To my right is happiness,
Pain to my left attends;
In the tranquil sea of music
Melody's journey ends."

Divine inconsistency

A careful student of Rabindranath will see that, in spite of the diversity of his ideas, in spite of the 'divine inconsistency' which is the prerogative of every great poet, this fundamental conviction about the value of the Middle Path is reflected at every stage of his creative work, and in every aspect of his thought. This basic conviction can be traced by examining his major works through all the stages of his

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evolution, beginning with the poems of *Prabhat Sangit* and *Manasi* right up to the glorious finale of *Akash Pradeep, Navajataka* and *Janmadine*. His plays reveal, in various ways, the same preoccupation with the idea of harmony and balance. It may be the balance between renunciation and indulgence, as in *Prakritir Pratisodh;* between divine and human law, as in *Visarjana*; between different aspects of nature, as in *Phalguni* and *Sharadotsav;* between different aspects of the human personality as in *Muktadhara* and *Raktakarabi*—but the idea is always present. A study of his essays—political, educational, literary and religious—would undoubtedly show the same pivotal notion.

In this brief paper it is obviously impossible to embark upon such an examination of Rabindranath's works taken in chronological order. An attempt *can* be made, however, to see how far the philosophy of the Middle Path has moulded the different fundamental aspects of Rabindranath's world-view. For the sake of convenience we can examine by turns his metaphysical views, his approach to the problem of the human Self, his philosophy of nature, his ethical convictions and his aesthetic perferences.

But a word of caution is necessary here. It is always a somewhat hazardous endeavour to classify the thoughts of a single individual into different compartments. In the case of a poet like Rabindranath such an attempt would be fraught with even greater danger. It would give us external and piecewise glimpses of his world outlook. We would miss the configuration, the *Gestaltqualität,* that transforms the part into an organic totality. In fact the Middle Path of which we have been speaking imposes upon Rabindranath's thought such unity and wholeness that we can hardly break it up without doing violence to its spirit and atmosphere. We have drawn pointed attention to this danger because attempts have been made in the past to analyse his philosophy in terms of the Vedic element, the Vaishnava element, and so on. One writer, who has given us what is otherwise one of the finest studies of Rabindranath, speaks of four influences: the influence of the Upanishads on the poet's *mind,* of Vaishnavism on his *heart,* of modern science

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on his *brain,* and of nature on his *sense-perception.* This is another example of how classifications of this type, ingenious as they seem, lead us to ignore the bond of unity which knits together all the facets of Rabindranath's philosophic personality.

In the paragraphs that follow, we shall, therefore, merely direct the torch of the Middle Path on Rabindranath's philosophy from different angles. Our attempt should not be construed as a *division* of that philosophy into different sections, such as metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, etc.

Religion of man

To begin with the traditional starting-point of metaphysical speculation, let us see how Rabindranath looks at the question of Ultimate Reality and its relation with the world and with human individuals. Like Kant he seems to have attached very little importance to 'proofs' for the existence of God. For him God is a moral necessity and even more emphatically an aethetic necessity. It is when we raise the question of God's nature that we enter the domain of controversy. Rabindranath's position on this question is one in which the personal God is accepted but the impersonal aspect is not brushed aside as of no significance. We never find the word Absolute in the lectures and writings of Rabindranath, even when these were originally delivered or written in English. He speaks of the Supreme Person, the Universal Person or the Supreme Man. At the same time he has no use for the idea of a finite God put forward by modern Italian idealists and others. He is convinced that personality does not make God limited.

Reality, for Rabindranath, is personal through and through. "It is personality acting upon personalities through incessant manifestations." Our practical life, our creative urges and moral compulsives all demand the recognition of personality at the root of things. "My world is given to a personal 'me' by a personal Being." It is a gift of soul. Sometimes the poet addresses the Supreme Person

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as Supreme Mind or Consciousness. Referring to one of his poems, 'Vishwanritya', he says: "Here I speak of the Conscious Person (*chinmaya purusa*) who steers the ship of humanity in the midst of obstacles and turmoils."

At the same time Rabindranath insists that the idea of Personality does not exhaust the nature of God. Therefore in *Religion of Man* he has repeatedly stated that the impersonal aspect of ultimate reality cannot be rejected. The two aspects are held together, and the idea which holds them together is that of Love. In a sermon entitled 'Samasya', the poet says: "In metaphysics a mighty discussion goes on about the question whether God is Personal or Impersonal, whether he has qualities or is qualityless, whether or not Form can be attributed to Him. But in Love yea and nay are held together. Love has *Nirguna* at one end, *Saguna* at the other end. The discussion about quality remains at the level of speculation only; it does not touch God Himself."

Aesthetic approach

We thus see that Rabindranath tries to fashion for himself a creative middle course between the two poles of the controversy. This is borne out when we consider the problem from the other side and enquire about the reality of the human Self and the world. Rabindranath rejects the notion of man's utter identity with God. Reality of the Self is not adjectival. In the words of Caird, "the Self cannot be propelled by any external force." God and man are eternally different, though there is a striving to eliminate the difference. In God we have the "Infinite ideal of perfection" and in man "the endless process of its realisation."

The reality of the world must also be accepted. Appearances are real. "Maya is like the paper of the banknote which is quite useless unless it bears the stamp which gives it value; but we cannot say that the paper has no existence at all." Here, again, we have to steer between two extremes. If we cannot altogether identify God with the universe, nor can we accept the absolute separateness of the

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universe from God. In this context Rabindranath's remarks on the doctrine of *Mayavada* are interesting. "Maya is that which revolts against the truth of relatedness." We must reject this discordant note and reassert the oneness of things; but this gives us no right to dismiss the world as a shadow. "When we deprive truth of its appearance it loses the best part of its reality. For appearance is a personal relationship. It is for *Me*." The world may be elusive but elusiveness is not outside the pall of reality. "The dream persists, it is real. The painted canvas is durable and substantial. The picture is a dream, it is Maya. Yet it is the picture and not the canvas which has the stamp of reality". Rabindranath's approach to the entire question is aesthetic rather than metaphysical. Maya indicates the idea. "The world as art is Maya. It is and is not. The ingredients are elusive. Call them Maya, disbelieve them if you will, the Great Artist, the *Mayavin* is not hurt."

The poet's interpretation of Maya is thus very elastic. That is why, while accepting a personal God and insisting upon the reality of the finite Self and the finite world, he recognises the profound truth behind the Advaita position. He chides fellow-theists for their intolerance. In one of his sermons he says: 'Mayavada'. Why should you get angry at the world? Do we not come across illusion in our daily life? Does truth reveal itself to us unclouded? We may say that the fuel of Maya has its purpose for lighting the fire of truth; but we cannot identify Maya with reality, just as we cannot identify the fuel with the fire. Fragmentariness has two aspects—it reveals the Infinite, but it also conceals the Infinite. The aspect in which it conceals the Infinite has been described as Maya. What right, then, have we to abuse the Doctrine of Maya?"

Monism and Dualism

It will thus be seen that Rabindranath refuses to adopt a rigid position on the question of Monism and Dualism. The many are real and yet their manyness does not affect the organic unity and coherence of the Whole. A logical

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and intellectual justification of this paradox is difficult. But in personal experience the contradictions dissolve. The poet rejects Absolute Monism. He says: "Only death is monistic; life is dualistic." Again, "the spirit of death is one, the spirit of life is many." And yet again: "The one without a second is emptiness, the other one makes it true."

At the same time a plurality of unrelated realities would be an absurd hypothesis. Between the one and the many there is a double relationship of identity and difference. This relationship must be regarded as a *living* reality. When the seed is under the earth it is 'one'. It faces no conflict. But when the seed has sprouted, the conflict has appeared and its true life has begun. In his essay, 'Amar Dharma', the poet says: "To reject a part of truth is to exclude truth. Reality is all-embracing. Truth has an inner inconsistency which arises not by excluding and rejecting differences but accepting and transcending them. Siva is Siva because he has swallowed the poison and assimilated it. I have no use for a truth which cuts out differences and erects a mechanical wall of consistency. I am not afraid of Difference."

To this inner consistency Rabindranath gives the name of Love. "In Love all contraries unite—In the field of metaphysical speculation Monism and Dualism are opposites. But love explains them both." Once we recognise this, duality ceases to be a puzzle. The Absolute breaks itself up into the many because "all love must have duality for its realisation." But as he puts it in another context, "It is a duality not to hostility but of relationship."

Such is the golden Middle Path between Monism and Dualism which Rabindranath pursues.

Man and Nature

The same desire to soften the limits of sectarian thought, and to mediate between extreme positions, is seen in Rabindranath's account of the relationship between Man and Nature. The two realms constitute a living whole. The antagonism between them is not absolute. To regard

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Man and Nature as irreconcilable opposites "is like dividing the bud and the blossom into two separate categories and putting their grace to the credit of two different and antithetical principles. In fact one of the grievances which the poet has against the Western attitude to life is that it does not recognise the kinship between the human and the non-8human in Nature. This idea has been developed in such essays as 'Tapovana', 'Amar Jagat', and 'Atmabodha', it is also expressed in some of his finest poems. In 'Banabani' the poet appears as the "ambassador of humanity conveying affectionate greetings to the kingdom of nature." Spirit and Nature need each other. Without man Nature would be like a broken arch, a circle unclosed.

> "In me have your flowers bloomed,
> In me have your seeds sprouted;
> For me do your trees shower their perfume
> and foliage !"

What is it that holds together the two realms? It is the vital energy, the *'Jivani-shakti'*, which occupies such a significant place in Rabindranath's poetry. "There is a stream of life within me. I experience it, and through it I feel my oneness with the world." It is the active principle of which Wordsworth said :

> "From link to link it circulates,
> The soul of all the world."

This indefinable force which unites man and Nature has been described by the poet in different ways. *Jivana-pravaha, Prana-dhara, Chetana-pravaha*—all these are only the different manifestations of the same energy. And the presiding deity of these manifestations is the *Jivandevata.*

This living unity between man and nature is not an accidental phenomenon; nor is it a transitory episode in the history of the universe. It has the hall-mark of permanence and is stamped by the will of God. With the rays of the first dawn that broke millions of years ago God has joined the life of man :

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"Laksha barash age je prabhat
Uthechhilo ei bhubane
Tahar arun kiran-kanika
Gantho na ki mor jibane?"

The relationship between man and Nature is not a domestic affair between the two; they are held together in God. 'The world without us and the intellect within us—these two are expressions of the same *shakti*. Having known this we experience the unity of Nature with the human mind and also the unity of our mind with God." It is the divine rhythm which animates the song of Nature and the song of humanity. In Rabindranath's conception of the universal harmony. Man and Nature are linked up in God while retaining their relative separateness. We can therefore say of him what Matthew Arnold said of Goethe:

'And he pursued a lonely road,
His eyes on Nature's plan;
Neither made man too much a God
Nor God too much a man.'

Life-force

One of Rabindranath's most significant works, *Manusher Dharma,* concludes with the words: "To see life as separate from the life-force is sorrow. To see them as one is joy." This may be taken as a convenient point of transition from the metaphysical to the ethical aspect of his thought. The moment we talk of joy we are in the realm of human experience, and joy lies in harmony and relativeness. Human action can be judged only by the criterion of this harmony. In his sermon, 'Atmabodha', he says: "Sin lies in being out of tune with the music of the Whole. Sin is the revolt of the part against the totality".

This central conception is worked out from many different angles. The joy or *Anandam* which is at the root of things, and which is only another name for the universal harmony, is expressed through human freedom and human action. Both these expressions are complex, they both reveal the diversity, richness and infinite possibilities of

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human life; and about both of them extreme opinions have been held.

Freedom, for instance, has been contrasted with law or restraint, as though the two were mutually exclusive. Rabindranath shows, with the help of some striking metaphors, how freedom and restraint must supplement each other. The autonomy of the human will is indeed a postulate of morality. But the will cannot function in a vacuum. It has to find its fulfilment in the will of others. In 'Swatantryer Parinam' and other sermons Rabindranath shows how the river of life has freedom on one of its banks and accommodation on the other.

Let us think of the mountaineers who advance step by step on a difficult, snowy terrain. They have to tie themselves up with a rope. This rope, which would be a bond in a prison house, is for them an indispensable instrument of progress. Or let us think of the musician who tightens the strings of his lute. He has imposed a restraint on himself and in this very restraint lies the freedom of his melody. Loosening the strings of the lute would not lead to freedom but to discord. Truth, then, has freedom on one side and law on the other. It proclaims : "By fear of him fire burns;" but it also proclaims : "from joy are all things born." Life is founded on law; but the law is expressed in the joy of freedom. A poem is bound by its metre, but the bond is of the poet's own choosing. Indeed God himself has, by creating the world, limited his own freedom :

"Apani prabhu srishti-bandhan pare
Bandha sabar kache."

Absolute freedom is anarchy; absolute determinism is extinction. In all ages great spiritual leaders have sought to establish sound moral values by building the Middle Path between anarchy and bondage. This is the path of self-realisation.

Proportion in action

On the question of action, too, Rabindranath counsels proportion. On the one hand we have the ascetic who turns away from the world of activity. In India this tendency

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has been particularly strong. Rabindranath protests against the view of Gough and other critics that the Upanishads preach "vacuity, inertia and apathy." He also rejects the misleading conception of Buddhism as a 'religion of inaction.' Nevertheless he admits that the Indian consciousness often wrongly identified activity with egoism. In 'Karmayog' and other essays, he has pointed to the disastrous results to which this has led.

True inwardness demands a sense of leisure, a feeling of being at ease in the universe. But leisure is not inaction; it is that with which right action is pervaded. The trouble with us is that we have divided work and leisure into rigid compartments. "The river finds its leisure in flowing, and the perfume in being wafted. But we do not find our leisure in our action themselves." In many of Rabindranath's poems we hear the joyous call for such an endeavour. Life is meant for action: "Take the pitcher and go to the river-bank." Has not the scripture enjoined: "In the midst of activity alone shalt thou desire to live for a hundred years?" Rabindranath's God is the 'God of the market-place' who acts and demands action from his devotees. In poem after poem we hear his message: "Put out the dim light. Wake up from your dreams. The sun calls you. Unbolt the doors, get out on the open road." Like Rudolph Eucken, Rabindranath identifies Spirit with 'action and struggle.' For him life is a deed.

But Rabindranath's activistic ethics do not lead him to condone the one-sided emphasis on action that has become inevitable in modern technological society. For Europe, he complains, action has become an end in itself. In 'Tatah Kim,' 'Duhkha' and other essays he lays bare the craze for 'doing' which leads the West to regard 'dying in harness' as the highest ideal of life.

Spiritual totality

It is good to be on the road; but one must arrive somewhere. If in modern society the destination is considered to be of no account, it is because our action is becoming increasingly divorced from the spiritual totality within us.

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Instead of following naturally from our Personality, action seems to pursue its own road. It 'feeds the demon of utility' all the time. Our deeds are being judged nowadays solely in the light of their 'use-value'. We seem to be "shackling the Infinite and taming him for domestic use." Instead of liberating us, or expressing our sense of freedom, our actions are binding us in a network of proximate needs. Life is becoming mechanical, men are turning into 'walking stomachs and brains.' With the overwhelming growth of necessity, our entire civilisation has become a 'gigantic office.' Our needs "rush and rustle, they are rude and unceremonious, they have no surplus or leisure."

Once more, then, Rabindranath advocates a synthesis of the active and contemplative aspects of human nature. We have been 'God-intoxicated' for centuries; Europe has shown us that the Infinite cannot be realised in the dark temple of inward self-sufficiecy. But we must not go to the other extreme; we must not become 'work-intoxicated'. We have to fashion a middle path between the inner and the outer, between Utilitarianism and Asceticism, between 'doing' and 'arriving.' This Middle Path, again, is self-realisation.

'Sadhana' or self-realisation is nothing but working out in our life the rhythm that unites Freedom and Restraint, Action and Contemplation.

Intellect and intuition

We have now seen how Rabindranath's metaphysical and ethical opinions are inspired by the need for a grand synthesis of the best in every school of thought. The most brilliant exposition of this fruitful Middle Path is to be seen in his aesthetic writings. This is quite natural, too; for Rabindranath's entire philosophic endeavour is animated by the breath of art-experience. For him the true and the good are mere abstractions if considered apart from the beautiful.

In the field of aesthetics we find the poet examining, with sympathy as well as discrimination the claims of Intellect and Intuition, of Feeling and Communication, of the

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subjective and objective determinations of Taste, of utility and pleasure. On all these questions one-sided assertions have often been made, particularly in recent times, leading to intolerance and dogmatism. Rabindranath feels that the outlook of the ancients was more mellow, more satisfying. They looked upon art as the supreme unifier of all aspects of life; and their evaluation of beauty and art rested on the principle of harmony. In one of his most brilliant essays on the subject he interprets ancient Indian aesthetics in terms of this universal principle of harmony. He shows how the ancients proceeded from differentiation of forms to proportion, from *rupa-bhedah* to *pramanani;* and how they enriched, through the concept of *rasa,* external harmony with internal unity.

Rabindranath sees no conflict between the ancient emphasis on harmony and the modern preoccupation with personality. On the contrary, it is just because the rhythm of art is intensely personal that aesthetic unification is so radically different from the unity which science aims at. It is the difference between a mechanistic consistency and a creative assimilation of the parts within the totality; between that which is determined and that which is unforeseeable. Here we find a striking similarity between the views of Rabindranath and those of Bergson.

Creative reconciliation

The idea of unity-in-difference in art is conveyed symbolically in some of the most significant of Rabindranath's poems. One such poem is 'Dui Nari', in which he has used the symbolism of Urvasi and Lakshmi. Here we have a profound, imaginative summing-up of the law of 'harmony through conflict'. The poem represents such a magnificent integration of all that is most vital in art that it would perhaps be permissible to paraphrase it here.

> "At some unrecorded moment, when the primeval ocean was churned, two forms arose out of its endless depth. One was beautiful Urvasi, queen of the passions, temptress of the gods. The other was the maternal Lakshmi, benefactress of all that lives

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and breathes. Urvasi brings with her the heady wine of April. She scatters the flaming roses of spring and bursts into the restless songs of youth. Her revelry distracts all mortals and steals the peace from their hearts.

"Then comes Lakshmi, her eyes glistening with tears of affection. She soothes the passions, and restores to men the serene joys of autumn—autumn with its fruitful maturity and peace. Her blessings bring perfection and plenty. Her gentle smile overflows with the nectar of grace."

Here the beautiful and the sublime are seen in apparent opposition to one another. There seems to be a conflict between the inner and the outer, passion and peace, will and the emotions,—a conflict which reminds us of Nietzsche's distinction between Appollonian and Dionysiac art. But the opposition is not final. The poem ends on a note of reconciliation. Lakshmi re-establishes the harmony which Urvasi interrupts. We are invited to visit the 'sacred confluence of Life and Death' where art finds its real home, and where a temple is dedicated to the worship of a single infinite principle of creation.

Thus in aesthetics, which is the 'crowning phase' of Rabindranath's philosophy as it is of Kant's, the Middle Path of creative reconciliation and integration reaches its glorious destination.

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B. B. Borkar

THE PROPHET OF BEAUTY

I shall ever cherish what I have received as a heritage from the bountiful land of Bengal. The heritage has been partly transmitted through the blood and partly through my cultural breeding. New vistas in literature, art, religion and politics were first opened up before me by the illustrious sons of Bengal. These visions dazzled me; they bewildered me; and I lost my bearings for a time. It was then that the noble voice of Rabindranath helped me recover my poise and find my direction. I missed seeing him personally but his great work helped my spirit establish contact with him. The urge for physical nearness to the place hallowed by him, if not to his person, drew me to Bolpur as a pilgrim. When I applied to my forehead the dust sanctified by his feet, my surrender to his spirit seemed to be complete. This, I consider, the great hour of fulfilment. The whole of Maharashtra shares this joy by celebrating the centenary of Gurudev's birth.

In the limitless world of beauty created by the genius of Rabindranath

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all the aesthetic aspects of our culture have blossomed forth in rich variety. It is thrilled by the joy that is in the ever youthful spring. It has also the anguish of the disconsolate cuckoo which stirs within us a nameless longing after some fugitive rapture.

Tagore is many things to many people. But the distilled essence of this perplexing variety is captured by the epithet—the Prophet of Beauty.

Every prophet is a step in the evolution of Man and prophets too, have evolved. The earliest ones were the prophets of commandments; next came the prophets of moral persuasion. These were followed by the prophets of Beauty. The first kind overawed the spirit into regimentation; the second stimulated the mind into willing acceptance and the third by endowing the human spirit with the finest edge achieved integration as well as sublimation of personality. It is only a mature nation from which can spring such a prophet of beauty. He is the shaper of today —and of tomorrow too.

Poet-seers

It is a travail of generations that gives a nation a poet-seer. He is the voice of its dreams and longings, its sorrows and sufferings, the memories of its past and the visions of its future, its attitudes and its ideals. He stirs it to renascence, with the awareness of its destiny and with confidence in its vitality. We have had a glorious tradition since the Vedic times of such poet-seers. Our eras are truly of their making. Till Gurudev appeared we had been in the era of Kalidasa. The Gurudev's followed his. Every living mind from Jawaharlal Nehru's to that of the youngster of today bears the impress of Gurudev. In Kalidasa is the summing up of India's golden age. In Rabindranath is the prelude to the golden age to come. When the nation is at the apex of its glory, its spiritual and material greatness, as it were, sings itself. But the music of a nation's ethos has to be drawn out with a sense of mission and dedication when the nation is undone by slavery, by poverty, and by the many evils that they engender. It is only the rare artist

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to whom this magic is given. Gurudev was one. That he and Kalidasa were kindred spirits is reflected even in his nostalgic writings on Kalidasa and his age. He is the Kalidasa of a more complex age and therefore, shall we say, he is an evolved Kalidasa.

The environment in which Rabindranath grew as a child helped him absorb, in fusion, the best of both the East and West. Nature played the foster-mother to this motherless child and the eager child assimilated the beauty and grandeur of Nature. What had thus become part of him cried irresistibly for expression. Of this he has spoken feelingly in his poem 'Nirjharer Swapnabhanga'. The stream welled up when the sea called and in the flow of the stream was the rhythm of his life. That was the moment of liberation as also of a true awareness of self. "What a profusion of song and story, of being and bliss, of longing and aspiration is in me!"

Heritage of India

What he found thus gathered up in him is the heritage of India. The touch of his keen personality made it purer and more gracious. But the realisation that it was within him initiated him into the great mystery at an early age. Every fibre of his being thus awakened, he tuned himself to the Cosmic. His spirit tooks wings and soared to heights from where in the drop was the ocean, in the finite the infinite.

The unique experience of this creative upsurge convinced him once for all that bliss, endless and divine bliss, is the be-all and end-all of the universe and that life's sole purpose is to realise it in the process of living. This radiant faith grew with Rabindranath and the stream too, till it swelled into a Ganges meeting the fathomless ocean. Yet the river nurses its identity—its individual ripples of ecstasy.

It is true that the poet-seers of the Upanishads and the epics had realised this truth and had revealed it to us in words that flowed with meaning. But their voice was lost in the wilderness of indolence, apathy and despair that had grown upon us. What remained at best was feeble parrot-

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ing. We turned our back on life and let ourselves be deluded by what masqueraded as virtue but was in reality rejection of all that made life full and significant. Most of our saints harped on the theme of the futility of life. Escape from life seemed to them the one purpose of life. And thus the common man lived as less than man, and the uncommon man stuck out his private path of emancipation. Between the negative and shrunken life of the former and the self-centred and socially sterile rapture of the other, our nation choked off the very springs of vitality.

We played up for long the antithesis between the individual self and the universal spirit, and our response to neither was uninhibited. It was Rabindranath who achieved the fusion of the essentials of both. The frontiers between the two seemed to shed their rigidity. What the senses lived took on a transcendental quality, what the spirit perceived was translated into the idiom of the senses. Howsoever earthly the theme, there is ever present a spiritual point of reference. The pervading spirit touches everything, even sadness and suffering, with a soft lustre. The spirit plays all the five roles the Bhagwad Gita ascribes to it—the onlooker, the assentor, the sustainer, the enjoyer and the creator. The individual self now unites with the spirit; now it separates from it. The infinite words of union and separation, one delicately shading off into another have been recaptured by Rabindranath.

Universal spirit

Rabindranath reads the universal spirit into the varied graces of nature. They express for him the oneness of the creator and his creation. The union of 'Jeev' and 'Shiv' within is projected without. This union he has expressed through innumerable forms. The frontiers between the two seemed to shed their rigidity. The abstract is made living and concrete.

The physical world and the human body have not been invested with such prestige by another Indian poet. But he also emphasises that they are frail and trivial unless animated by the touch of the cosmic spirit. Illuminated by

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the spirit, his exploration of beauty presents a blend of the 'Preyas' and the 'Shreyas' and the meeting ground for the Earth and the Heaven. The joy of Advaita unfolds itself through the play of Dvaita. Into the shaping of his world of creation has gone the immortal essence of our cultural heritage but it is concerned deeply with the future of man. These urges relating to the past and the future found, happily, a mode of expression perfectly tuned to the needs of the present. This lifts him above the plane of national eminence and places him among the greatest poets of the world.

The sense of fellowship between man and man, between man and the rest of creation, is the perennial source of the great joy that brings forth the best out of his poetic being. His indignation is for those who would weaken and thwart this fellowship, irrespective of whether he has any ties with them. But the indignation, howsoever keen and righteous, would not dry up the compassion that he had even for the worst of wrongdoers nor would it disturb his profound poise and dignity.

Elevation of man

Nothing could diminish Tagore's faith in the joy of life—not all the miseries and menaces that fate and man have contrived. He dedicated his art to the elevation of Man. He was the dreamer of his dreams, the architect of his hopes and the sentinel of his moral values. Even in the first flush of creation he realised that this was the task Destiny had entrusted to him and that the fulfilment of the task would need more than God-given talents—it would need unstinting dedication of everything within him. Creation was sacrifice.

This sacrifice was for the salvation of man—of man who has shed all that separates him from other men. This conception of one world went far beyond that political slogan and philosophic abstraction. It was an ideal to be achieved, a new design for man's perfection.

Rabindranath, the prophet of beauty, was ever the pilgrim groping for the new world. It was an arduous search

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and the uncertain path was strewn with pits and thorns. But he braved these hazards with faith in his heart and song on his lips. The footprints he has left behind bear the rhythm of the poet's song—and they will always cheer up those kindred spirits to come who would be drawn by the fragrance of the new world—his dream.

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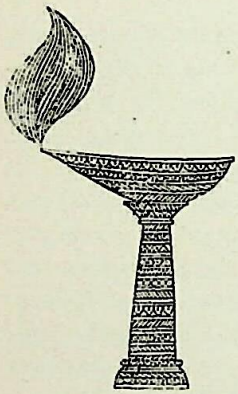
Kalindi Charan Panigrahi

LITERATURE OF TRIUMPHANT LOVE

One can hardly overestimate the need of literature in this age of science and reason on the pleas of which suspicion and scepticism are breeding disbelief and distrust, insincerity and hypocricy are openly justified and dishonesty and discord are landmarks of civilisation. We feel the need of literature when strife and dispute become the law of life, fraud and deceit the order of the day, insolence and intimidation—the characteristics of national morality. The literature of Rabindranath stands out as guide and pathfinder in the present crisis. It is not only the mirror of the society of his times, but also the kindly light that leads us in all ages and in all climes.



This is a literature of love—the love that stands the test of time, the love that assumes invincible strength to undergo extreme sacrifices. It is the love for man that condemns war and violence in every form, denounces colonialism and avarice at all costs and rejects hatred and enmity with all the might that it can command. It is the love that transcends the differences of

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races and colours, castes and creeds. It is the universal cord that binds all life in a single knot that is unshakable and unbreakable. It produces an unending rhythm of truth, beauty and bliss which is the keynote of Rabindranath's creations.

Life is a rhythmic whole. It starts with a rhythm, moves and fades away with a rhythm to be born again. For it is interlinked with the universe. The sun, the moon, the earth and the numerous stars and planets move in perfect rhythm to produce the seasons and the months, the spring and the rain, the light and the shade, the smiles and the tears.

All art and literature are but the reflections of the rhythm of life. The stronger and the mightier its notes, the greater the magnitude and intensity of art and literature. And it becomes mightier and stronger only when there is a discord and disharmony in life, an artificial state of affairs that checks its spontaneous growth. Strifes and wars have thus become responsible for the creation of great art and literature.

Rabindranath flourished in an age when the life of India was throbbing violently with a discordant note. India was awakening from her long stupor of ignorance, disunity and sluggishness. The struggle to shake off the bondage of her artificial environment was manifest in the shape of the War of Independence in 1857. The spirit of the age gave birth to a new literature influenced by Western technique.

Born after the struggle, Rabindranath must have been inspired and animated by the brave fight of the Indian army against the foreign invaders. But the love for his country was not confined to its geographical boundary only. He invokes his country to awake only where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls and where the mind is without fear and the head is held high. There is no trace of hatred towards foreigners in his writings. On the contrary, Gora is unable to believe himself a foreigner in a changed circumstance when suddenly he is stirred up to find out that India was not his

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motherland. Gora's great love is unable to distinguish and differentiate between the foreign and the genuine. For Rabindranath defied any other frontier except the frontier of love.

Symphony of love

It is bewildering to learn that, with a bomb or a pistol in one hand and the *Gita* or the *Gitanjali* in the other, terrorists of Bengal thought it a pious act to kill the alien rulers. For nowhere in his numerous songs, poems, prayers, short stories, essays, novels, plays, and travelogues has Rabindranath encouraged murder and killing. His entire literary output pulsates with the storm and the stress of the eventful contemporary life and yet rises above all disparity and discord to reach the level of concord—the concord of a perpetual rhythm of life producing the strongest, the best and the most stimulating notes. The works of Rabindranath which are as stupendous as they are magnificent can be adjudged in this perspective. His writings, either in prose or in verse, are composed of an indivisible symphony of rhythm that runs through eternity, as it were, since when man was seen on the earth. It not only visualises but also realises a human society of fraternity, equality, liberty and triumphant love. This is the symphony of love that extends from one end of the earth to the other to establish an unbreakable and unbendable concord among mankind.

We try to bend and break the incessant flow of the note that tunes our every nerve, and we try to produce a dissonant sound. But the discord is a mere cadence to modulate the rise and fall of the all-pervading endless light of music that illumines the atmosphere—its holy stream rushing from sky to sky and breaking through insurmountable obstacles. It is the music of light, love and truth.

And light, Oh ! where is the light ? Have you not heard its silent footsteps ? It comes, comes and ever comes. Many a song has he sung in many a mood of mind. But all their notes have always proclaimed that it comes, comes and ever comes. It is the world-filling light, eye-kissing light and the heart-sweetening light.

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Garland of flowers

The numerous poems and songs written by him are strung together in a huge garland of flowers having different shapes and different hues and beauty, but all proclaiming the victory of love and beauty in multifarious rhythms and expressions. *Gitanjali, Gitimalya, Gitavitan, Lekha, Purabi, Parishesa, Manabani, Sonar Tari, Kheya, Sishu, Chaitali, Katha O Kahini, Seshraksha* and the like roll down to a single mission—the mission of love and truth.

The greatest of his discovery is love and his conception of love is beyond measure. All that is ugly, hideous, monstrous, depressing and revolting in life melts into one sweet harmony—the harmony of love. The numerous varied characters of his novels, short stories and plays, each with some abnormality, have started an expedition, as it were, in quest of the mysteries of truth, beauty and love. Each of his poems, lyrics, stories, essays, novels, plays and travelogues and even the large number of letters written by him to his friends are highly finished products of a consummate artist of great Indian heritage. It is no wonder therefore that murder and violence have played a very insignificant part in his creative works.

If murder is at all committed, it is done only unwittingly as in his short story 'Sasti', (Punishment). When Dhukhiram, blind with hunger kills his quarrelsome wife, Chhidam, the younger brother saves him from the gallows by sacrificing his own innocent wife. His 'Kabuliwala' can however deliberately stab a person only to defend truth. For the wild mountain dweller could not stand and tolerate falsehood as he is a human being endowed with all the good qualities of love and affection. In another of his short stories 'Megha O Raudra' (Sun and the cloud) Sashibhusan, a kind-hearted and meek studious young patriot stands for the same truth and undergoes all hardships and punishment as a result of assaulting a European police officer who had sunk a boat carrying a native crew for mere sport. The symbolism and the central truth of his plays and operas—*The King of the Dark Chamber, The Post Office, Chitra, Falguni* (The Cycle of Spring) *Sanyasi* (Ascetic), *Malini,*

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Sacrifice or *Karna and Kunti* also can be summed up in three words only—truth, beauty and love that manifest in the varied phases of relations between man and nature, man and woman, mother and son and the eternal youth and spring that never decay. Each of his essays is marked with the sublimity of the thought-provoking pronouncements of an immortal prophet. The views and findings given in his travel stories of Japan, America, Russia and Europe are those of a benevolent citizen of the world. He excels also as a letter-writer. Each letter is a brilliant document of life and literature. The characters of his novels *Chokher Bali, Yogayog,* or *Sesh Prasna* vibrate with a passion of pathos even towards the ignorant and the blunt. He has written for children, for youth and for men and women in all walks of life. His voluminous creations need a herculean task for the compiler to classify them.

Love, sacrifice and forgiveness are but synonyms in the thesaurus of Rabindranath. It is the love and youth that conquers old age and kills death itself. It is the omnipotent love that transforms a hardened criminal into a saint of poets. It transforms a *dasyu* Ratnakar into *adikavi* Valmiki the first Indian versifier, an unscrupulous killer of men to be shocked so profoundly at the pitiable sight of a mere bird shot with an arrow, as to sing the glory of creation and conceive of a Rama Rajya.

Portrait of a people's representative

Rabindranath's conception of a people's representative has been epitomised in his story-poem 'Pratinidhi', describing Chhatrapati Sivaji who begged from door to door at the bidding of his Guru, Ramdas, to pass the test of becoming the true representative of the beggars and used the pink coloured flag named the Bhagwa Jhanda after his Guru's loin cloth. Love shines and grows powerful only when sharpened with sacrifice. It is the same love that inspires the poet to establish his communion with the Creator through the created things. It gives him the strength never to disown the poor or bend his knees before the insolent might and he seeks that invincible strength to surrender his

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strength to the will of love. The poet is able to love his God because He grants him the freedom even to deny Him.

One can kill when one is driven to an awful situation or due to one's ignorance and prejudice. But human qualities awake and conquer in the end as is proved from the age of Ramayana and its author. Rabindranath has given us the best that is in the eternal human nature to emulate and has condemned all that is sordid, depraved, pernicious and corrupt with the tremendous force of a pen handed down to heredity for striving to unfold the supreme truth that is Love.

"Mor marane tomar habe jaya.
Mor jibane tomar parichaya.
Mor duhkha je ranga satadal
Aj ghirila tomar padatal,
Mor ananda se je manihar
Mukute tomar bandha raya
Mor tyage je tomar habe jaya.
Mor preme je tomar parichaya.
Mor dhairjya tomar rajpath
Se je langhibe banaparbat
Mor birjya tomar jayarath
Tomari pataka sire baya."

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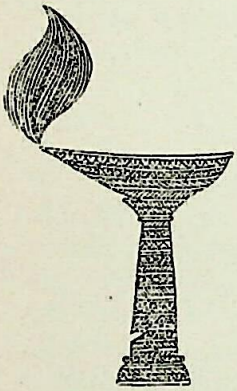
Tatsuo Morimoto, *Japan*

RABINDRANATH TAGORE : THE GREAT SENTINEL OF HUMANITY

Rabindranath Tagore was essentially a poet to his finger-tips. He began writing verses at eight and was dictating poems even on his death-bed at eighty. He also displayed his versatile genius as novelist, dramatist, actor, educator, philosopher, composer and painter, and he is called the Leonardo da Vinci in Indian Renaissance. But he was not a mere visionary, sitting idly in his chair and singing on the beauty of nature and the sacredness of human life. He was more than a mere poet and artist as Mahatma Gandhi was more than a mere politician ; he was, as Gandhiji called adequately, the "Great Sentinel" of humanity whose compassionate eyes were always on the destiny of India and the world.



When the first World War broke out. the author of *Gitanjali* which is the offering from Finite to Infinite could not overlook the savagery of humanity which were happening in Europe thousands of miles away from his own country as old Goethe felt for the misery of other countries like that of his own country. C. F. Andrews tells us the state of mind of Tagore at that time :

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"It was in the month of May, in the year 1914, when the first great mental agony came to the poet on account of some impending disaster to humanity, which his own spirit vaguely felt to be almost immediately imminent. After a time of acute suffering, which was like the suffering of death, his first premonition passed away; but again in the latter part of June, in that very same year, and during the early part of July, this sense of immediate disaster increased with him. He wrote at this time, in Bengali, one of the most striking of his short poems, called 'The Destroyer' ...

'Is it the Destroyer who comes?
For the boisterous sea of tears heaves
in the flood-tide of pain...'

In August, the desolating struggle between France and Germany began. All through the early days of the war, Rabindranath's own suffering was intense. He went away into solitude and wrote Bengali poems dealing with the subjects of the world's disaster."[1]

In the meanwhile, the War was over and it seemed that peace came to Europe. But the end of a war does not mean the end of human evil. Nay, it is only a short period of truce which increases greater hatred and misunderstanding among nations. Tagore soon perceived this and throughout his world-travels he denounced the aggressive nationalism as a crime against humanity and preached world peace by friendship and co-operation.

Then, how could a poet-philosopher who sought for the Infinite throughout his life become such a passionate champion of humanity? Before considering this important problem, we must first glance at his philosophy of life because his humanistic idea is only the outcome of his deep internal thought.

Tagore, as a born poet, was interested not in the mere philosophic abstractions but in the visible world with various forms, colours and frangrance. He sings:

"Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the

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embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.
Thou ever pourest for me the fresh draught of thy wine of various colours and fragrance, filling this earthen vessel to the brim.
My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flame and place them before the altar of thy temple.
No, I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight."[2]

Again, in 'Sanyasi' which was written in the next year of his great spiritual experience, he confesses through the mouth of the hero, "the great is to be found in the small, the infinite within the bounds of form and the eternal freedom of the soul in love."[3] This idea is the starting point of Tagore's philosophy, which is emphasised again and again in his poems, dramas and essays. For example, in one of the poems of *Fruit-Gathering* he sings this idea symbolically, putting it in a tiny dewdrop;

" 'What is there but the sky, O Sun, that can hold thine image?'
'I dream of thee, but to serve thee I can never hope,' the dewdrop wept and said, 'I am too small to take thee unto me, great load, and my life is all tears.'
'I illumine the limitless sky, yet I can yield myself up to a tiny drop of dew,' thus the Sun said; 'I shall become but a sparkle of light and fill you, and your little life will be a laughing orb.' "[4]

Whenever I read this poem, I remember the following words of Goethe: "If the eye were not sunny it could not glimpse the sun. If God's own strength did not lie in us, how could the Divine delight us?" Goethe also sought for God not outside but in nature, until he reached at his conception of identity of God and nature. He lived, as Dr. Schweitzer said, in the conviction that God is in all things and all things are in God. So he sings:

"What is Infinity?
How canst thou so torture thyself?
Look within:

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If there thou lack'st infinity in being and thought,
No help for thee."

Tagore sings as if he responded to this poem:

"When dew falls as tears from the morning sky,
When riverside trees sparkle in sunlight,
So close in my heart their shadows fall,
Then I know
The Universe is a floating lotus,
In the holy lake of my mind.
Then I know
I am the voice within the Voice,
The song within the Song,
The life within the Life,"
The light breaking through the heart of Darkness."[5]

It is needless to explain that 'the Universe', 'the Voice', 'the Song' and 'the Life' sung in this poem correspond to the thought of 'Macrocosm' in Goethe's world-view, and 'the holy lake of my mind' on which the Universe can float, 'the voice', 'the song' and 'the life' to the thought of 'microcosm'. Thus, in the poetry of Goethe and Tagore the passionate love of the earth and its inhabitants is the most distinct characteristic. It is extremely interesting that these two greatest poets that the East and the West have produced happened to have the same faith in the immanence of the Supreme in nature although there were some differences of the nuance in the way of their expression, and yet that they imbibed the same inspiration from their own source of philosophy—Goethe from Spinoza and Tagore from the Upanishads. But we need not marvel at this coincidence of thought between Goethe and Tagore, because Truth lying behind the appearances is one and the East and the West are indivisible in essence. Both the East and the West, as Goethe said in 'West-Oestlicher Divan', are in the hands of God.

The fundamental idea of the Upanishads is the unity of Brahman and Atman, that is to say, "the Transcendent Supreme is immanent in man and therefore the individual is sacred."[6] Tagore as well as Goethe went into the finite in every direction to march into the Infinite[7] and discovered

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"in human beings a value far higher than that which they derive from objective nature."[8] In his conversation with Einstein, Tagore said, "If there be any truth absolutely unrelated to humanity, then for us it is absolutely non-existing."[9] In Tagore's philosophy of world and life affirmation, man stands at the apex of creation because man has all possibilities of creation in his higher self. In the preface to *The Religion of Man* he says: "The idea of the humanity of our God or the divinity of Man the eternal is the main subject of the book." According to Tagore, to seek for God is to seek for man and to love God is to love man. Therefore it is rather natural that the poet felt the great mental agony like the suffering of death when he saw the dignity of man "suffered at the hands of man—not tigers and snakes, not elemental forces of nature, but human beings."[10]

Tagore never sought for God in heaven. He sought Him not in dim twilight of temple and in the solitude of a cave but in the open and dusty road of human ordeal where the tiller is tilling the ground and the stone-breaker is breaking stones.[11] So, he could say with strong confidence in the last chapter of *Sadhana:*

> "Where can I meet thee unless in this my home made thine? Where can I join thee unless in this my work transformed into thy work? If I leave my home I shall not reach thy home; if I cease my work I can never join thee in thy work. For thou dwellest in me and I in thee. Thou without me or I without thee are nothing."[12]

Therefore, just as to realise the possibilities of divinity in incomplete man is the aim of Tagore's 'Religion of Man', to bring heaven down to earth is the ideal of his social philosophy. "The Kingdom of Heaven is here on this earth" said Tagore in one of his addresses in Japan, "It is there, where we realise our best relations with our fellow-beings, where there is no mutual suspicion and misunderstanding—there is the Kingdom of Heaven, in the spirit of comradeship and love."[13] When he spoke on Tagore's Insistence on Life, Dr. Radhakrishnan also said:

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> "To dwell in the realm of spirit does not mean that we should be indifferent to the realities of the world. .....The spiritual man does not turn his back on the realities of the world, but works in it with the sole object of creating better material and spiritual conditions."[14]

In this meaning it is natural that the more man becomes spiritualised, the more he becomes a man of action. It is Tagore's intense love and compassion of humanity that made the aged poet undertake those arduous world travels. Even when he sang the most beautiful hymns to God that all the poets of the world had been able to sing, he felt for not only the ignorant and poor people in his own country but all the downtrodden people on the earth. Mr. Krishna Kripalani, Tagore's grandson-in-law, who attended on Tagore in his death-bed day and night tells us how the poet worried over the fate of the innocent millions of all nations who had been dragged into the war as its victims and how his voice broke down as he related how he had seen half-starved women and children stir up puddles of mud for a handful of drinking water.[15]

* * * *

Tagore loved Japan deeply and visited our country three times in his life. The first visit of the poet was in 1916 during the first World War. When he first arrived in our country, both our Government and people welcomed him enthusiastically as a master poet from the sister nation of the East. He also admired the great love of Beauty and the courtesy and courage of the Japanese life. He said in a lecture at the University of Tokyo:

> "I have travelled in many countries and have met with men of all classes, but never in my travels did I feel the presence of the human so distinctly as in this land. ... You see everywhere emblems of love and admiration, and not mostly of ambition and greed. You see a people whose heart has come out and scattered itself in profusion in its commonest utensils of everyday life, in its social institutions, in its manners, which are carefully perfect, and in its

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dealings with things which are not only deft but graceful in every movement."[16]

But at the same time he perceived the militant imperialism on every side in Japan. He, raising his beautiful silvery voice, condemned severely the policy of our Government in those days. And he exhorted our people "to take its stand upon the higher ideals of humanity and never to follow the West in its acceptance of the organised selfishness of Nationalism as its religion, never to gloat upon the feebleness of its neighbours, never to be unscrupulous in its behaviour to the weak, where it can be gloriously mean with impunity, while turning its right cheek of brighter humanity for the kiss of admiration to those who have the power to deal it a blow."[17] He also emphasised that we should first of all purge off the narrow, selfish desire for wealth and power for our own country which blurred our vision. However, for that reason, as C. F. Andrews writes who accompanied with the poet to Japan, "the hint went abroad that such 'pacifist' teaching was a danger in war-time, and that the Indian poet represented a defeated nation. Therefore, almost as rapidly as the enthusiasm had arisen, it subsided."[18] Today no nations will read these warnings of Tagore with deeper emotion than our nation.

In spite of his untiring efforts for peace, Tagore on his death-bed had to worry over the fate of the world and feel the great mental agony like the suffering of death again on account of the disaster of the second World War then raging. Indeed half his life was "the tragic tale of the gradual loss of his faith in the claims of European nations to civilisation."[19] But, as long as his faith in humanity was based on his deep philosophy of life, he did not "commit the grievous sin of losing faith in Man."[20] Thus, as he prophesied in his address at Milan in 1926,[21] he could say with a loud voice in his last message to the world, *The Crisis in Civilisation* which was written three months before his death :

> "I would rather look forward to the opening of a new chapter in his history after the cataclysm is over and the atmosphere rendered clean with the spirit of service and sacrifice. Perhaps that dawn will come

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from this horizon, from the East where the sun rises. A day will come when unvanquished Man will retrace his path of conquest, despite all barriers, to win back his lost human heritage."[22]

As a matter of course, Tagore was not a politician in the professional sense. He did not believe in any 'ism.' He did not show any blueprint for the world's salvation. But his message of love and peace is an inexhaustible source from which the world of today and tomorrow can derive all the ways to the eternal peace.

NOTES

[1] From 'A Reminiscence' by C. F. Andrews, contributed to *Liber Amicorum Romain Rolland*, 1926.

[2] *Gitanjali* LXXIII.

[3] Cf. *Sanyasi* IV, & Dr. Radhakrishnan *Great Indian*, p. 92.

[4] *Fruit-Gathering* LXII.

[5] *A Flight of Swan* (Poems from *Balaka*), p. 60.

[6] Dr. Radhakrishnan's Foreword to 'A Flight of Swan.'

[7] Goethe sings in one of his aphorism:

Wouldst thou march into the Infinite,
Go into the Finite in every direction.

[8] Cf. Dr. Radhakrishnan *Goethe*.

[9] *The Religion of Man*, p. 225.

[10] Cf. 'The Voice of Humanity' (An Address given at Milan in 1926).

[11] Cf. *Gitanjali* XI, & Mr. K. R. Kripalani *Gandhi, Tagore and Nehru*, p. 15.

[12] *Sadhana*, pp. 163-4.

[13] 'International Relations' (A Lecture, 1924).

[14] Dr. Radhakrishnan, *Great Indian*, pp. 90-1.

[15] Mr. K. R. Kripalani, *Gandhi, Tagore and Nehru*, p. 55.

[16] *Nationalism*, pp. 69-70.

[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 38-9.

[18] *Letters to a Friend*, p. 68.

[19] *The Crisis in Civilisation*, p. 12.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[21] He said, "I have great faith in humanity. Like the sun it can be clouded, but never extinguished."

[22] *The Crisis in Civilisation*, p. 18.

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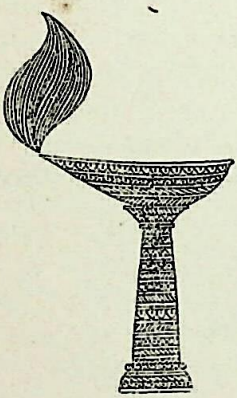
G. V. Sitapati

RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S MESSAGE TO HUMANITY



Rabindranath Tagore never proffered any formal message to any one in the world. He never prepared a code of altruistic rules of conduct or messages because he knew that such a code could at best be memorised without any realisation of the significance of the messages unless they were presented with an appropriate background and set-up. Almost all his writings—whether they are short or lengthy poems; or short stories or voluminous novels; or playlets or dramas; or short sketches or lengthy essays—contain messages which are visible if only we care to see them. There are messages to the young and the old; to the teacher and the taught; to the rich and the poor; to the individual and united nations; to the East and the West and to the world as a whole.

To children he would say: You are now children but in a few years you will be citizens of your state and of the world and you must be useful to yourselves and to your fellow-citizens but you cannot be such unless you have the necessary equipment for it. You are entitled to have the required education and

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training; do demand it from your parents and the state.

To the parents, Tagore would say: The procreative instinct in you is common to all living beings. But you are endowed by Nature with a higher intellect and better sense and faculties than are possessed by other living beings. Teach you children to love Truth. Their future depends upon your upbringing and the healthy atmosphere and environment you provide them.

To the teachers, Tagore would say: Yours is the noblest of professions. Do not stuff the brains of children with knowledge beyond their comprehension; educate them in the real sense of the word by developing their intellectual faculties; teach them to stand on their legs in life and to love their companions; to adore Truth and God; to appreciate Beauty, Harmony and Melody. Open their minds to the world of Truth.

To the rich, he would say: Your wealth proves to be a curse to you if you do not make a right use of it. The value of your riches is enhanced by the society in which you live. Elevate therefore the society and through it enhance your position with service to Man and God.

Not an empty dream

To the poor he would say: Realise that man shall not live by bread alone and that God helps those who help themselves.

His message to the individual in his society is better expressed in his own words:

> "Through creation man expresses his truth, through that expression he gains back his truth in its fulness. Human society is for the best expression of man and that expression, according to its perfection, leads him to the full realisation of the divine in humanity....His faith in the Infinite is creative; his desire for success is constructive; one is his home and the other is his office."

To Tagore, life is real and not an empty dream. "Because I love this life," he wrote, "I know that I shall

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love death as well." He prayed that "he might be truly grateful to God for the great gift of human life."

Regarding patriotism, he says, Love for your home, your society, and your country is good provided it does not degenerate to parochialism. Remember that your country is a member of the wide world-organisation. Rabindranath loved his country as fervently as any other patriot; but he was also a citizen of the world. He was ready to admire and accept merit wherever it existed. God's good gifts are spread all over the world and not limited to any single country however great it may be.

Referring to the glory of the past, Tagore explains the Religion of the Forest and says "The view of this world which India has taken is summed up in one compound Sanskrit word, *Sat-chid-ananda.* Our consciousness of the world merely as the sum-total of things that exist and as governed by law is imperfect. But it is perfect when our consciousness realises all things as spiritualy one with it and therefore capable of giving us joy. For us the highest purpose of this world is not merely living in it, knowing it and making use of it but realising our own selves in it through expansion of sympathy; not alienating ourselves from it and dominating it but comprehending and uniting it with ourselves in perfect union."

Message of peace

Tagore was not content with what had been achieved in the past, Life is ever dynamic and never static. The world is changing. The social organization which suited well in the past is now found to be ill-suited and imperfect. *"Sarve janah sukhino bhavantu"* is the ideal of our forefathers but it loses its significance when it is reduced to mere conventional phraseology. On the contrary, we have experienced strife everywhere, the domination of the stronger over the weaker and the consequent oppression prevailing in all circles of human organisation—the family, the social and religious orders, the State and the world. Revolt or rebellion has been the natural outcome of tyranny in one

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form or other. Very often the intensive feature of tyranny could be measured by the extensive revolt. The comparatively mild form of intellectual tyranny of the Brahman in India or of the Clergy in Europe has had its repercussions. Tagore fought the tyranny at home and abroad not by arms or physical strength but by messages of warning and offered solution through his writings. It is said that "when his *Gitanjali* was first published in an English translation the West hailed it for its message of peace and love in a war-torn and embittered world."

Man is a gregarious animal and has been always living and moving in company. Unity has been the essential feature of any organised group of men—whether small or great. It has to be maintained either by the free will of the members on the basis of equal partnership or by force exercised by a privileged individual or class. The former lasts long and the latter depends upon the authority exercised by the dominating one, few or many. If the authority is tyrannical it is sure to be broken. A spirit of sacrifice is necessary on the part of the partners of any union. Even in the case of the smallest unit, the family, the husband and wife must sacrifice a part of their interests to be a harmonious unit. Solidarity is maintained so long as patriarchy is an accepted principle. Solidarity is also maintained in larger groups—the village community, the city state, the country state, the federal state or empire. But as the political union grew larger and wider the solidarity is threatened on account of the selfishness of the ruling classes and their oppression of the ruled. Empire builders have been always selfish. Every state had to face the danger of being conquered by a stronger state. There has been always the fear of a devastating war. We have witnessed two great wars; the second being more extensive and more destructive than the first. Powerful states have now developed atomic power to such an extent that there has arisen a universal fear that a third great war might end in total destruction of the world and the effacement of the human race. As Toynbee, the great historian, said in the lectures he recently delivered at Delhi there are only two alternatives facing us: either a

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worldwide union of states or a worldwide destruction of the human race.

Visva-Bharati

Rabindranath Tagore died on August 7, 1941 when the Second Great War was going on; but he could foresee the trend of events in the history of the world when he saw the effects of the First Great War. He was never a politician and he never took part in politics but he had such a wonderful grip of the subject and such an admirable insight into the logical sequence of events that he could suggest a practicable remedy to restore peace and order. In the lectures which he delivered at the University of Tokyo on Nationalism, he described the evils in modern nation-states, viz. Government by machinery, national selfishness and even social injustice and the slavery of the poor. But he lost his popularity in Japan by his plain speaking; nor could he be appreciated in the United States. He warned India against false patriotism but could not find any favourable response even in his own country. In these circumstances he thought of a plan to break down the narrow boundaries of national interest. The Visva-Bharati which he founded at Santiniketan was the outcome of his magnificent idea in 1918; and it was planned to develop into a world university. He first wanted to make it "a true centre for all the different Eastern cultures"—the civilisation of India, of the Far East and of Islam. He developed faith in free co-operation between nations, in a worldwide brotherhood. He paid another visit to the West and had tremendous welcome and warm reception wherever he went; and this encouraged him to do all he could to "bring about a true meeting of the East and the West beyond the boundaries of politics, and race and creed." His Visva-Bharati was well appreciated by the leading countries all over the world and from 1921 onwards some great European scholars came to help the progress of Visva-Bharati.

Universal brotherhood

It is a great misfortune that Rabindranath left this

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world at a time when his presence was most needed for the spiritual awakening of this vast world. He was one of the few great men of the world who realised that the political unity of the world could not be achieved and even if achieved by force of circumstances could not be maintained long effectively unless the cultural unity of the world had been achieved and that for the achievement of this cultural unity differences of colour, caste and creed, national prejudices, and social evils should disappear, man should realise that he is a citizen of the world, states should be partners of equal importance in the vast federal union of the world. Man has learnt to conquer nature and the enemies that cause disease, sap his energy and reduce his longevity; he has been endeavouring to increase his provisions for the sustenance of life. His sky-scrapers, gigantic bridges, rockets and other wonderful achievements are the external manifestation of the internal magnitude of the human brain. Rabindranath did not fail to appreciate the growing civilisation in this direction but he would say that all these were like machines without a soul. According to Tagore peace and happiness will prevail and last long when only true love and truth are achieved and universal brotherhood is an accomplished fact.

Let us all cherish his memory and do our utmost to promote the best interests of his Visva-Bharati. When Tagore's works are translated into the various languages of the world and they are widely read I am sure that his noble and divine ideas will inspire nations all over the world and the idea of universal brotherhood as conceived by Tagore will materialise and universal peace will prevail and last long. "*Sarve janah sukhino bhavantu!*"

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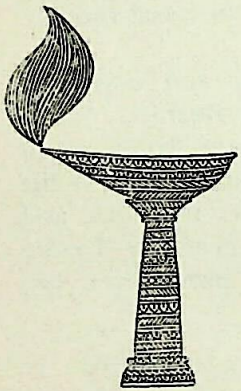
Manoje Basu

RABINDRANATH, THE WORLD PILGRIM

The history and progress of man mainly centred on the idea of nationalism in the nineteenth century. The nation then was the greatest truth to man. But in the twentieth century, thanks to science, the whole universe is now at our service. Life has extended far and wide and all men are brothers today. We have established economic, political, social and cultural relations with all countries and all races. A parochial nationalism would mean death today.



This world-view has been present in Indian thought all along. The Upanishads have called it the most important of all human endeavour. In the words of Rabindranath: "When a man does not realise his kinship with the world he lives in a prison-house whose walls are alien to him. When he meets the eternal spirit in all objects, then is he emancipated, for then he discovers the fullest significance of the world into which he is born; then he finds himself in perfect truth, and his harmony with all is established. Thus the text of our everyday meditation is the *Gayatri*, a

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verse which is considered to be the epitome of all the Vedas. By its help, we try to realise the essential unity of the world with the conscious soul of the man; we learn to perceive the unity to help together by the one eternal spirit whose power creates the earth, the sky, and the stars; and at the same time irradiates our mind with the light of a consciousness that moves and exists in unbroken continuity with the outer world."

The Buddha too has given us his dictates for the fulfilment of this same sense, so that the mind of man may proceed from Non-violence to Charity, from Charity to Love. To Buddhism, Love is not merely a feeling, it is a universal truth, such as Light is. The Emperor Asoka was inspired by this same Love when he said "Sabbe munisa paja mama" (All men are my children). And the great king sent his emissaries of peace and love to his children all over the world. In a later age, the Emperor Akbar too endeavoured to spread his new Elahi faith whose chief principle was the same, Suih-e-Kull, Friendship for all.

Like most important truths this sense of brotherhood remains dead and bookish to most men. But Rabindranath was born in an exceptional family. His father Debendranath had found the inspiration of his life in the great message of the Upanishads. His grandfather Dwarkanath sailed over to England and France and came into contact with the mind of Europe. Only one Bengali Hindu of any renown had done this before Dwarkanath—Raja Ram Mohun Roy. And Rabindranath always regarded Ram Mohun as the hero of his life. In his words "he (Ram Mohun) stood up alone to unite India with the rest of the world on the basis of humanity. No system, no dogma could stand in his way. With an exquisitely generous heart and a liberal imagination he could accept the West without rejecting the East. He has let us realise that we belong to the whole world; it was for us that Christ or Buddha or Mahomet gave and received their lives."

Debendranath did not like to tie down his son to any set educational system. Of his father the poet says: "We were not deprived of his counsel, but he never restricted

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our work or our intelligence by laying down any formal code of rule." Even at that early age the outside world used to fascinate the child's mind. Of his childhood the poet says, "The world had often invited me and said 'You are my own'.... My soul had dimly awakened to the call of the world outside."

Personal contacts

He went to England with his brother Satyendranath. The idea was to be a barrister. "I was able to study in the (London) University for three months only," he writes, "but I obtained almost all my understanding of English culture from personal contacts. The Artist who fashions us takes every opportunity to mingle new elements in his creation. Three months of close intimacy with English hearts sufficed for this development. Mrs. Scott made it my duty each evening till eleven o'clock to read aloud by turn from poetic drama and history. In this way I did a great deal of reading in a short space of time. It was not prescribed class study, and my understanding of human nature developed side by side with my knowledge of literature. I went to England but I did not become a barrister. I received no shock calculated to shatter the original framework of my life—rather East and West met in friendship in my own person."

His first book was *Kabi-Kahini* (the Poet's Tale). It was printed in 1878 (1285 B.S.). He was only sixteen then. The remarkable thing it shows is the feeling for all mankind and the dream of a happier world freed from tyranny and injustice. The poet addresses the Himalayas and asks if the mountains do not shiver at the sight of so much selfishness, so much despotism. He asks when this nightmare will be over and the world will smile at the dawn of a new day. Then there will be no rich or poor and all men shall be brothers.

This sense of universal brotherhood can be found almost anywhere in his poetry:

"My heart is longing and crying
to mix with human hearts.

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With the world on the great highways
to travel day and night.
Little songs and little things come to
my mind this morning.
I seem to be floating on a stream in a boat,
passing by the world on both banks.
Every little scene gives a sigh and says,
'I go'

* * * *

World's pleasure and pain, like brother and sister,
lift their pathetic eyes upon my face from afar.
Homely love peeps from her cottage corner to give
me her passing glance.

* * * *

With eager eyes I gaze from my heart's window
on to the heart of the world.
And feel that with all its good and bad
it is lovable.

* * * *

The world today is wild with the
delirium of hatred,
The conflicts are cruel and unceasing
in anguish,
Crooked are its paths, tangled its bonds
of greed.
All creatures are crying for a new birth
of thine,
Oh Thou of boundless life, save them,
rouse Thine eternal voice of hope,
Let Love's lotus with its inexhaustible
treasure of honey
Open its petal in thy light.
O Serene, O Free,
in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness
wipe away all dark stains from the heart of
this earth.

* * * *

I have had my invitation to this world's
festival and thus my life has been blessed.

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My eyes have seen and my ears have heard."

Tagore is a poet of the world, and a poet of our nation at once. While longing for excursions into the universe, he is at the same time seeking self-realisation in the country's service :

"As I stood on the wide Earth,
disappeared all fear and sharme :
I could feel that in this world
even for me there was some work.
So I stood by my country one morn
and prayed with folded hands :
'Accept, O Mother, all my life
this I consecrate to Thee.' "

It has been possible for him to construct a bridge between the country and the universe, the home and the world, the near and the far. It would be wrong to suppose that the poet's nationalism gradually developed into a spirit of internationalism. There is no real conflict between the two—they go hand in hand. Indeed, without nationalism, internationalism often degenerates into a kind of romantic illusion. In Tagore's poetry these two ideas are interfused—'true to the kindred points of heaven and home'.

Disillusioned poet

During the partition of Bengal, or the Jallianwallahbagh horrors or the massacre at Hijli, the poet's voice roared in reprimand. He sought remedies, and himself plunged into the struggle where necessary. While national calamities agonised him, international crises too perturbed him again and again. His indignation was not only on behalf of the tyrannised. Perhaps what pained him more was the fact that the tyrant himself was corrupted by his tyranny. His last address was *The Crisis in Civilisation*—one of his best-known pieces. In his early life he had returned from Europe full of glorious memories of the culture of the West, but these were shattered by the horrors of the Second World War—and *The Crisis in Civilisation* is the cry of despair torn from the disillusioned poet in his eightieth year :

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> "I had at one time believed that the spring of civilisation would issue out of the heart of Europe. But today when I am about to quit the world that faith has gone bankrupt altogether . . . . From one end of the world to the other the poisonous fumes of hatred darken the atmosphere. The spirit of violence which perhaps lay dormant in the psychology of the West, has at last roused itself and desecrates the spirit of man."

There is a reference in it to a scandalous page of past history: "Another great and ancient civilisation of whose recent tragic history the British cannot disclaim responsibility is China. To serve their national profit the British first doped her people with opium and then appropriated a portion of her territory"—meaning the Opium War with China. It is not insignificant that he mentions this in his last message for he protested against it in one of his very earliest essays 'The Traffic of Death in China' written when he was only twenty. The same indignation then inspired his youthful pen:

> "A whole nation, China, has been forced by Great Britain to accept the opium poison simply for commercial greed. In her helplessness China pathetically declared: 'I do not require any opium.' But the British shopkeeper answered: That's all nonsense. You must take it.' Both the hands of China were tightly bound. Opium was forced down China's throat, with the help of guns and bayonets, while the British merchants cried 'you have to pay the price of all the opium you take from us.'"

Family of man

He was a member of the family of Man. Wherever humanity has been hurt, the poet's pen has shone sharply like a sword. The lynching of Negroes in America, the massacre of Jews in Czarist Russia, the tyranny of Belgians in Congo, the Fascist attack on Democracy in Spain, Hitler's occupation of Czechoslovakia—no injustice has escaped the poet's eyes.

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He won the Nobel Prize in 1913. It gave him a greater opportunity to be intimate with other great minds of the world. At the time of the First World War he raised his voice in protest with other intellectuals. The year 1916 saw him touring Japan and America—the subject of his discussions, nationalism. In these he dwelt upon the respective nature of Nationalism in the East and West. Western nationalism, he said, had been leading so far to war and imperialism; that of the East had always been in favour of peace and brotherhood.

Years ago he had founded his school at Santiniketan after the pattern of the monastic schools of ancient India. Now the poet decided to build there the 'bridge of the Universal Man'. In a letter from Los Angeles he wrote at this time. "The first preparations for the future unification of the races will be laid on these fields of Bolpur. I mean to take this spot beyond all racial geography to hoist there the flag of all humanity." He gave it a name too—Visva-Bharati, the Muse (*Bharati*) of the World (*Visva*). 'Bharati' may also refer to 'Bharat' or India.

The First World War was over. In 1920-21 the poet set out once again for Europe and America. His aim was to spread this message of the Brotherhood of Man. There should be no difference between the East and the West, all the nations should feel a deep spiritual unity among themselves. Others have spoken such words. Other great souls have dreamt such noble dreams. But Tagore was not content to remain a dreamer. He did not rest simply by putting these truths into words.

Message of new age

In December, 1921, he founded the Visva-Bharati. Its aim and its character were expressed in one brief Sanskrit motto: *'Yatra viswam bhavatyeka needam'*—where the whole world forms its one single nest. In his own words:

> "The great misery that is haunting Europe through peace and war shows that Man nas forgotten his own truth in the disguise of the 'Nation' concept. The Human Spirit declares: 'Unveil'. It is because

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this spirit has been masked that man is able to be so insolently criminal against his fellowmen and to think that it has brought him gain rather than loss. And when this 'Nation'—is bringing its own destruction today the nations of Europe are frightened at last.

"The message of the new age is, 'Unveil, O Man, and show your own self' ... Many guests have come here from many parts of the world ... What truth do we hope to see here embodied? That truth is in the phrase 'where the whole world forms its one single nest'. We have seen men in different lands divided by their own national frontiers; we have not found the complete Man there. Let our institution be such a place where we can realise the essential humanity of Man, freed from all barriers of caste, creed, religion and language. To see thus is to see the new age."

And so it was. Visva-Bharati was the centre of all mankind. There came Moslems and Christians, Buddhists and Jains. Came Indians outside Bengal. Came the people from overseas—the English and the French, Germans, Italians, Czechs, Hungarians, Americans, Egyptians, Chinese, Japanese, Ceylonese, African Negroes, American Negroes, Persians from Iran, Jews from Israel. All the world assembled in the fields of Santiniketan.

Tagore went all over the world, carrying the message of Visva-Bharati. He went to China in 1924, reestablishing the age-old friendship between these two great countries. The same year saw him among Peruvians attending the centenary of their liberty. He stopped at Italy on his way back. To Europe again after a couple of years—all over central and western Europe. Thence to the Balkan lands, to Turkey and Egypt. The Malay islands, Java, Bali and Siam next year, to re-discover Greater India. Then to Canada and Indo-China. After that he toured extensively in Britain, France, Germany, Denmark, Russia and America. He visited Russia after the Revolution and wrote in wonder: "I have come to Russia. Else my life's pilgrimage would have remained incomplete." He went to Persia after this —in April, 1932.

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The pilgrim of the world! The vision of the divinity of Man in all the varied guises! Unity amidst diversity! He conquered the world with his songs, speeches, drama and recitation. It was India's cultural conquest. She was poor and under foreign rule then, but her poet earned the honour of a king. Nay, even more. For a king's armies assert their triumph in streams of blood, the conquered remain hostile. A king's glories are uncertain.

Tagore's influence

Many years have passed since then. But Tagore's influence can still be witnessed in the outside world. I too have seen some of it as a member of cultural delegations. The very honour of being Tagore's countryman sometimes brings unexpected esteem. Once when I was in China in 1952, we went to see the Central College of Arts in Peking. Let me quote a few lines from what I wrote then:

> "We climbed up to the first floor. Right in front was a bearded portrait of our own Rabindranath, the largest and most prominent among those countless pictures. You could not miss it.
>
> "We may not know it, but Tagore is still a friend of Chinese intellectuals, still an ambassador of peace and progress in this new age. How long ago was it? The Tagore of the picture welcomed his countrymen with his serene smile. I noticed the name of the painter—Chu-bei-haung. He never saw the poet, but painted from imagination."

In 1954, I was in Soviet Russia and went to the Union of Writers, Moscow:

> "I was led to a room. We sat around a large table—their writers and ours. An octogenarian started to talk of Tagore. 'It was just after the Revolution,' he said, 'Tagore was in Russia. Things were not running smoothly. There was want everywhere—scarcity of food—many discomforts. Tagore was brought to live in a house on the outskirts of the city. It was quiet there.'

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"The old writer went on: 'Tagore's poetry had been translated into Russian even before the Revolution. We knew him, had read him. I remember one occasion. We were fifteen writers seated together. Tagore was at the end of the table. It was a pleasure to observe him again and again. Just a prophet, he looked, with his handsome features and flowing beard. He was talking rather softly. What a musical voice! And he went on talking for two hours! We were afraid that he might feel tired. But no, not a bit. Moscow was rather like a big village then. And this was the capital of such a vast country. But he wasn't disappointed.'

"The old author suddenly laughed: 'A funny thing happened one day. Somehow the rumour spread that we had concealed a bishop in that house. You see, Tagore's beard and his long robes made them think he was a priest. The fury of the Revolution hadn't quite died down, priests and padres were still loked down upon. They were trying to aid the aristocrats to bring back the old regime, you know. So the crowd came and accused us one day. We tried to explain to them—a great poet from India, we said, a very honoured guest. So they asked to see him. Tagore appeared on the balcony, the morning sun shining on him. The crowd was charmed, they cheered him. It was a new trouble from then on: they began to come every day and ask for him: Well, Tagore used to meet their demands.'"

More of Tagore

When I went to Berlin in 1957, I heard that they were staging Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* a few hundred miles away, in Karl Marx Staadt (formerly Chemnitz). We Indians were invited to the performance. After the show, the cast and the managers very kindly came to our hotel at midnight.

"The director, Herr Kestler talked of Rabindra-

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nath: 'I was a young man,' he said, 'when Tagore came here. I used to loiter around him.'

"There is was! 'Please tell us more about him,' they all demanded.

'What a wonderful voice he had! Never heard anything so sweet. The serene look, the white beard. We requested him, but he didn't lecture that day. He staged his play *The Post Office* instead.' "

I remember another occasion. It happened in Prague, the capital of Czechoslovakia. My friend Sri Mohonlal Ganguly (who is the grandson of Abanindranath Tagore the great master of painting) was taking me to see a nursery school. We got down from the tram at a certain crossing, and then he could not quite make out the way. We did not remember the name of our street either. My friend started to make anxious enquiries of the passers-by.

Then we saw a very old lady staring dimly at me. She was muttering something under her breath. She came straight towards me and asked, "Are you from India? You see, an Indian poet once came here many years ago, Tagore. A tall, radiant figure. He used to recite his poems, and his voice was like the flute. We didn't understand the words, but it was so sweet!"

I said with some bravado: "Of course I am an Indian, madam. Moreover, I too am from Calcutta, the home of Tagore."

She nursed the poet

There we were—the three of us on the streets of Prague. She had nursed the poet all those years ago—it seemed as if we knew her from then. She talked on and on in her broken English. "I was young then, quite a young girl. I and my husband had to look after him. What grand memories we have of those days! How long ago it was! I have grown old now, the Wars have come and gone, upsetting all. But those days with Tagore are still quite fresh in my memory."

I tried to put a word sideways: "We are so glad to hear that, madam. But we are going to a school. Do you

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happen to know where it is?" We gave the name of the school.

She knew the place, after all. "But it is quite a long way from here," she said, "come, I'll take you there. You may lose your way again. And it will give me more of your company. You are Tagore's people."

The sun was high. The old lady led us along, talking all the way. It was quite a distance. We were perspiring, but she never noticed it, musing on Tagore. At last we were near the school. We were late, the teachers were anxiously waiting near the gate. But the old lady went on and on. We had to cut her short and bid farewell. She went back alone through the long, hot street. We should not be seeing her again. And we forgot to ask her name and address.

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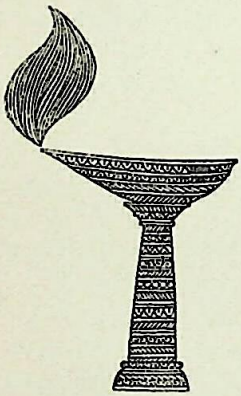
A. A. Bake, *The Netherlands*

TAGORE AND HIS SONGS

I am grateful that ways and means have been found for me to say a few words of what I owe to Rabindranath and his music.

My case has been a little different from that of those who, some forty odd years ago, admired him for his poetry alone and were surprised when they learned that most of his poems were really songs.



Quite early on, when I was still a student at the University of Leiden, it was my good fortune to get to know a brilliant pupil of the Sufi-musician Inayat Khan who, during the first two decades of this century lived and taught mostly in London and Paris having been sent for that very purpose by his original patron, the old Maharaja of Baroda. Working with this devotee of Indian music to whom Inayat Khan had given the name of Khurshed I not only heard some of Tagore's songs, but was also introduced to the admirable book, *Music of Hindostan,* which Fox Strangways had published a few years before (in 1914) in which he gave several of Tagore's songs in Western notation and

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described the poet as a musician in a few lines, the deep truth of which I was to learn in later years.

He says (on p. 91): "In accordance with the best Indian tradition he is poet and musician in one. His poetry is beginning to speak for itself: even in a few scattered translations it is possible to hear the voice of a man who thinks deeply and truly, who sees things as they really are, making invisible things visible as fluorescence does in optics, and touching them with tenderness and reverence. To hear him sing his poems is to realise the music in a way that is seldom given to a foreigner to do. The notes of the songs are no longer their mere selves, but the vehicle of a personality and, as such, they go behind this or that system of music to that beauty of sound which all systems put out their hands to seize."

I think it was first through the poet's songs that I realised the power of a melody to lift the words above their everyday meaning, a power to which the poet himself referred when he said, "My poems without their melodies are like butterflies without wings." They also made me realise the difference between a melody conceived together with its accompaniment in the way of our composers during the last five or six centuries, and a melody that exists in its own right, a creation of a complete and satisfying wholeness which an accompaniment, of whatever nature, can only spoil. The enjoyment of the beauty of the word remained, but a special intense satisfaction was added to it when one had absorbed the melody as well.

Naturally that intense enjoyment did not come to me before I had been working myself on the poet's compositions for some years, under the guidance of the poet's great-nephew, the fine and sensitive musician Dinendranath Tagore who was the guardian of all the poet's countless melodies.

It was a great and inestimable privilege to be in such close contact with the poet and his great-nephew those three or four years in Santiniketan from 1925 onwards. Being there, however, gave me more: it widened my understanding of other forms of Indian music, classical as well as the end-

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less varieties of living folk music. How could I ever have come to know the beauties of the folk music of Gujerat and Kathiawar, if one of the keenest musicians and singers I have known, Pinakin Trivedi, had not been a student there at the time, to let me hear the garbas, the ballads and the bhajans and, later on, introduce me to the singer-poet Meghani, that storehouse of the lore of Kathiawar? How could I ever have been enchanted by the intense devotion and wisdom of the songs of the Bauls of East Bengal had I not heard about them from the poet himself and from his dear friend Kshiti Mohan Sen?

I could go on, but I think that I have indicated at least to some extent the debt I owe to the poet and his music and to Santiniketan—Visva-Bharati which was his creation and which, in those years, really promised to come near to what the poet had seen in his vision; a meeting place of all the best elements in India seen as the spiritual unity of his conception and of the world outside it.

It was music that brought me there and among all the experiences of those years for which I am grateful, the music of Santiniketan stands first, music which—in Fox Strangways' words about the poet, "made invisible things visible."

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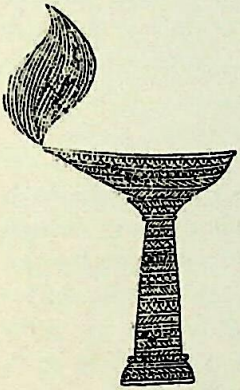
Soumyendranath Tagore

RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S CONTRIBUTION TO INDIAN MUSIC



Bountiful nature provided the inhabitants of ancient India with the primal necessities of life, and thus gave them ample leisure for delving deeper and deeper into the mysteries of the world of phenomena. The Indian mind did not end its quest with its acquaintance with the outer crusts of things, but sought the knowledge of their essential structure. The universal essence of things became the object of realisation. This universal essence by its very nature is just impersonal abstraction and this impersonality manifested itself, also in the sphere of music. The melody, 'Bhairabi,' wove for us the feeling of a morning which had not a particle of time-element in its composition. It expressed the quintessence of all mornings of all times. It completely freed itself from the bondage of particular time and particular emotions. The same is true also with 'Purabi', the melody of the evening. 'Purabi' draws with melodic lines the impersonal and abstract evening which has transcended the limits of time and all transient emotions. All Indian 'Ragas' and 'Raginis' (melodies)

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are keyed to the ideal of abstract universalism. No particular feeling or individual emotion had any place in them. In course of time numerous new melodies were created from the first group of forty-two melodies handed down to us by tradition. Throughout the centuries gifted composers enriched Indian music with new creations. These creations nevertheless were all in the traditional pattern of abstract universalism. None of these melodies ever gave expression to the infinite and varied emotions of the fleeting moments of life, emotions which are genuine blossoms of the human heart, and are tender and fragile as the dewdrops.

Rabindranath Tagore introduced in Indian music a new note which till then was completely unknown. His songs gave expression to the moods of the flowing moments of life. The abstract impersonal morning of the melody Bhairabi was now individualised in many mornings—a spring morning, a sombre morning of the rainy reason, an autumnal morning, a morning drooping with sorrow, a morning sparkling with joy, a morning soft and warm with love and a morning tremulous with the pain of seperation from the loved one. All these mornings and many more took melodic forms in Tagore's songs. Songs become concrete and individual without losing in the least their universality.

Function of art

Art deals with the particular and its purpose is to express the concrete universal, not the abstract universal which is the domain of science. In Indian classical music which is impersonal there is not much scope for variation or for the autonomy of personal emotions within the strict boundaries of impersonal abstractions. And yet creation is the very manifestation of the personal. The function of art is to bear witness to the thoughts, emotions and sensibility of the individual. Rabindranath's songs introduced this personal lyrical main-stream into the placid, limitless, vastness of abstract classical music. Music was rescued from the status of an impersonal exercise and transmuted into an expression of a purely personal emotion. Rabindranath solemnised the union between the lyric and the melody. In order to achieve

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his consummation the modal forms were coalesced, blended and synthesised. Every feeling and emotion received individual recognition in Tagore's songs. The essentiality of an individual structure of feeling and melody in song, was recognised for the very first time in Indian music. Indian music received from the hands of Rabindranath Tagore the supreme gift of freedom from the prison-house of impersonal abstraction, and became humanised.

This is the great contribution of Rabindranath Tagore to Indian music. Rabindranath's songs introduced yet another element in the development of Indian music. The classical Indian court music was a supreme example of *mesalliance*. Beautiful melodies exhausted themselves in trying to sustain emasculated lyricism. A melody was merely a vessel carrying a ballast of clichés. Rabindranath's music is the confluence of sublime melody and unparalleled lyricism. There is no discord between the melody and the lyric. The words do no countermand the melody nor does the melody unconditionally accept the suzerainty of the lyric. To Tagore, the words of a song were not mere scaflolding for sustaining the structure of the melody, as is wont in traditional Indian music. In the opinion of Tagore, a song is not just melody, it is much more than that, it is a blending of words pregnant with deep emotion, with melody capable of giving effective tonal form to those emotions.

Rhythmic dynamism

New melodies were fashioned not only by the blending of existing ones, and by evolving new combinations of notes, but also by new rhythmic arrangement of notes of a bar. Rabindranath removed the rhythmic inelasticity of Bengali poetry by treating compound consonants as two beats, and thus filling up the gaps between words with the lingering resonance of notes. This was one of the various ways by which the Poet gave rhythmic freedom to Bengali poetry. Bengali poetry gained rhythmic dynamism and imponderability, and became frolicsome like air and rippling with life.

Likewise in the sphere of songs, the Poet had created new rhythms. There is of course, a fundamental difference

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between the rhythm of a song and that of a poem. In a poem the words retain their natural pronunciations more or less. But the same words when woven into the melody of a song are either drawn out or shortened. The natural pronunciations of words get new dimensions in a song. The rhythm of a song follows a path of its own.

Tagore created rhythmic variations, bearing in mind the emotional content of the songs. Sometimes he brought about these variations by introducing words with compound consonants such as in songs—'Pran chaye chakkhu na chaye,' 'Neela anjana ghana', 'Sarba kharbatare dahe'.

Sometimes the rhythmic innovation was achieved by the arrangement of words according to a sound-pattern, such as in the line—"Madhukara padabhara kampita champaka angane" of the song—'Bajore banshari bajo'.

Sometimes this rhythmic variation was brought about by laying stress on particular letters of a word ; for example the variation achieved by laying stress on the second letter of each word of the line—'Tumi to shaye jabaye chale'.

Tagore introduced pauses between the letters of a word of a song and achieved rhythmic effect, such as in songs—'Mamo chitte niti nritye', Dhire, dhire, dhire bawo,' and in some others.

Thus by fashioning new beats in a bar, Rabindranath Tagore created new 'tals', such as Ekadashi tal of 3/4/4 beats in a bar, Rupakara tal of 3/2/3 beats and Naba tal of 3/6/ beats in a bar.

Evolution

Songs of Tagore bear witness to four different stages of development. In the first period one finds in the melodic structure of the songs of Tagore an avoidance of decorative phrases, and notices a quiet dignity, and close alliance between the words and notes of the songs. They were typically classical in form. While Rabindranath's earliest compositions embraced a wide range of emotions, they were nevertheless circumscribd within the modal precincts of classical music.

Rabindranath realised that it was impossible to convey

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the entire gamut of one's impressions, sensations or sensibility by conforming in letter to the accepted modal forms. There were nuances which could hardly be expressed by a dogmatic observance of traditional forms. His imperative need to express himself in full measure led him to search for new melodies which he achieved simply by combining and commingling the various Ragas and Raginis. In the second period, blending of different melodies for the creation of new ones was undertaken so that individual moods could be reflected in the songs. Tagore created innumerable new melodies by blending existing and traditional melodies. The new melodies reflect the pressure of individual moods. These blendings, however, are not the result of mechanical eclecticism. They bear testimony to authentic synthesis, and they differ from the blending of melodies done by old masters, in their emphasis on the individual character of each emotion.

In the third period, one finds that Tagore tired of formalism and sophistication of Indian music, and turned towards folk-songs, and immersed his being into the living stream of folk melodies that welled out of the very soil. The rusticity of the melody-forms of folk-songs, however, laid bare their innate insufficiency to Tagore; and in the fourth period of his melodic creation, Tagore blended folk tunes with classical tunes to create new melodies.

Substance of tradition

But this authority to create new melodies was not an expression of emotional anarchy. To transmute the petrified modal forms in the crucible of the subjective to something alive and vibrant did not mean the repudiation of traditional forms. The new melodies were shaped out of the substance of the old.

It is neither desirable nor possible to totally repudiate tradition. This principle is equally operative in the case of music. One cannot create new melodies by permanently emigrating from the environments of Ragas and Raginis. In the words of Rabindranath "whatever liberties I may indulge in. I cannot completely overstep the boundaries of

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Ragas and Raginis. I discovered long ago that while one could escape the captivity of their dungeon, their abode endures. I believe that it will always be thus. It may be unpardonable to shackle the feet of art but its progress cannot be impeded by following a charted route."

With what magical skill Rabindranath achieved the modal union of melodies! Rabindranath borrowed and adopted the melodies of various provinces. He went further afield and culled Western melodies to suit the theme of his songs as in *Balmiki-Prativa*. One would fall into a grievous error however if one imagines for a moment that his own melodies were mere facsimilies of their original, that his function was mainly imitative. He paid a heavy interest on whatever he borrowed. He transposed, transformed and transmuted them by the sorcery of his own genius.

As an example of this let us examine his song 'Aji bahiche basanta'—'The vernal breeze so gently wafts today'. It is based on Raga Bahar. The melody has been refashioned from a Hindi song. Although the song is mainly based on Raga Bahar, Rabindranath has discreetly punctuated the song with notes which strictly speaking is a breach of the modal form. If some Ustad however desperately tries to conform to the classical form alone it will become obvious even to a lay audience that with Rabindranath the level of the music is always attuned to the level of the language and that his songs were not intended to vindicate the impersonal modal forms. This should warn the over-zealous Ustads from succumbing to the temptation of adhering merely to the formal architecture of classicism and divesting songs of their emotional contents.

A living force

This caution applies to *tan* as well. *Tan* is the development of the notes of a Raga in quick tempo. Rabindranath did not care for an endless elaborate extension of it. He preferred a sensitive delicate filigree play of music to the over-decorative and the baroque. Melodies are created not for the purpose of indulging in tonal acrobatics with notes. Rabindranath said—"In the days when Indian music was a

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living force, the Bulbul did not earn applause for fighting but for singing." One of the fundamental components of song is the lyric which means an emotive arrangement of words.

One cannot take liberty with the verbal structure of a song without diminishing its emotional appeal. *Tan* is to Indian music what ornaments are to woman, to be used judiciously and discreetly but never flaunted. An over-emphasis and elaboration of the obvious is a heresy against beauty itself. To quote Rabindranath :

> "Those who have the courage to dare compose songs, those who have dedication and skill sing them. They are two different *genre* of people. But sometimes very rarely they meet. As a result art and skill have to be apportioned between the composer and the Ustad. The composer inherits art, the vocalist his legacy of skill or virtuosity. But virtuosity is merely the dross and cannot be passed off as gold. But with an Ustad the increasing element of dross comes near to debasing the rich, undefiled ore of music itself. Because the Ustad remains at best a mediocrity and nothing is more fatal to art or life than the regime of the mediocrity."

Profound insight

Rabindranath had a profound insight into the under-currents of Indian classical music. His genius was a swift eddy that cut through the stagnant pool of classicism. He was also able to predict the future of Indian music, its evolutionary processes and the means by which it could revitalise itself. But an unbridled mania for creating something new can be a very hazardous occupation which can finally defeat its own purpose. This demented penchant for novelty is hostile to the act of genuine creativeness. Rabindranath Tagore wrote:

> "When man's store of creativeness is impoverished, it is then that he swaggers and blusters about modernism and innovations. They do not have the *panache* to serve a fresh ambrosial brew in the cups of anti-

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> quity and they try to vindicate their belief in a bowdlerised modernism by shrieking in strident voices."

And again :

> "I will call him young the horizon of whose imagination is enraptured with the hues of an everlasting ageless dawn. A dawn the crimson of whose feet owes nothing to quintals of blood purchased from New Market's slaughter houses."

In this way in the course of sixty years, some three thousand songs were composed by Rabindranath Tagore.

Indian music, which in the course of centuries had become sophisticated and static, once more was enlivened with the dynamic life-current emerging from the creative contributions of a master-composer. Through Tagore, Indian music regained vital contact with life and felt within itself the assurance of a creative future.

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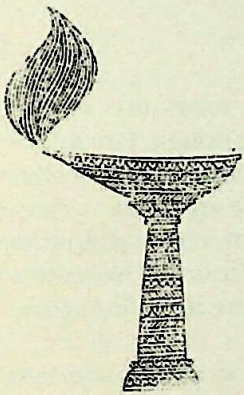
Santideva Ghosh

MELODY OF THE SOUL

Gurudeva Rabindranath Tagore was a poet, a writer, a dramatist, a composer of songs and music, an actor, an educationist, a painter, a lover of humanity, and also a spiritual devotee. In all spheres of life he expressed himself to such an extent that his influence will be felt for a long time to come in the cultural history of India, and particularly of Bengal. Gurudeva's life was the ideal of a fully developed personality. One integral part of that life was that of a music lover, which I shall endeavour to represent here. Indian history has yet to produce a composer who could express life in so many varied forms so very successfully.



Gurudeva Rabindranath first tried his hand at composing songs when he was a boy of thirteen or fourteen. That flow of inspiration, once started, never stopped until a few months before his death. Over a period of nearly sixty-five years, he composed more than two thousand songs.

This power of composition did not come to him all at once. He had to work hard for it in his early years. The

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musical atmosphere of his home in boyhood helped him a good deal in this respect. His childhood and youth were spent in an atmosphere congenial to Hindustani (Hindi) or North Indian music. Old Hindi or Hindustani songs in the classical style held a special place of honour in his family. His elder brothers were always engrossed in practising such songs. They even composed new Bengali songs on those models. At different religious functions and festivals held in their family, the children always had to sing those songs. Classical Ustads or master-singers of those times used to coach them. Over and above this, many celebrated Ustads were invited to give demonstrations. They came and stayed in the house. Amongst these, even the names of famous Ustads like Moula Baksh, are heard. Thus the musical life of Gurudeva began in such an atmosphere of classical Hindustani music. At a very early age he learnt from his elder brothers how to compose Bengali songs to the melodies from classical Hindi music. Though his lessons in composition started at the age of thirteen or fourteen, it was only when he was seventeen or eighteen that he attempted to compose songs entirely on his own.

Tagore songs

But it must be understood that his songs are not of the same type as classical Hindi songs. Though Gurudeva was influenced by them, it is a well-known fact that his songs are not of the same genus. Therefore, the question arises: what is the place of these Tagore songs in classical Indian music? To what class do they belong? In order to answer that question we must know first of all something about the different types of Indian songs.

Musical authorities of old in our country divided Indian music into two categories: one they called *marga* and the other *desi*. Matanga, the author of *Brhad-desi* has explained that the

"Songs accompanied by alapa etc., are called 'Marga', and songs which do not possess such characteristics are called 'Desi'."

The same author has also said that the abovementioned

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sangita marga or *marga* songs had become obsolete in India a long time ago. But there is no reason to accept the fact that this type of ancient music was completely forgotten.

Most probably the tradition of the *Alapadinibaddha marga sangita* of ancient times has merged with classical Hindustani (North Indian) and Karnatic (South Indian) styles of music, and the *alapa-sangit* of this age may be a successor of the same tradition. Always we have to remember that the custom of adorning words with diverse ornaments of *suras* or Raginis is a relic of the *marga sangita* system of ancient times, inherited from the past. Indeed, it is the language of the songs of the *marga* age which has died, not the system itself.

Musical expression

In their present form, we see in classical Hindustani songs only a dominance of the *sura* or the ornamental flourishes of Ragas and Raginis (or musical modes). Ustads confine words within Raginis and give prominence to the virtuosity shown in the pattern of *tan* or drawing-out of the phrases, *vistara* (or spreading out) and *alapa* (or improvisation on the pattern). Though the Ragas and Raginis are set to tune with the basic meaning of the words, the singers give prominence only to the *Raginis*. And probably because we think the ancient *alapadi-nibaddha-sangita* (i.e. song or music combined with, or confined to, *alapa*) to be the highest form of musical expression, we accept singers who are proficient in *alapa-sangita* as the best artist of Indian music.

To explain *desi sangita* more clearly, the same writer on ancient Indian music has written further that the songs that women, children, shephereds and kings fondly and freely sing in their own countries are called *desi*.

From their description, it can be well imagined that by *desi* they meant the type of song we now call *adhunika* or modern and *loka-sangita*, popular or folk music. Therefore, it can be assumed that in this type of song, words have a very important place. In Ragini, the melody and the words are equally important, as they make the subtle inner meaning of the words clearer. Like *alapapadi-nibaddha*

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marga sangita, the Raginis of *desi-sangita* did not rise above the words but went together with them. Moreover, that *desi* songs did not mean songs of two or three notes only, as sung by the Adibasis or original inhabitants of India, is proved by the following verse by the author of one of the old Sanskrit treatises on music. He says that all *desi* Ragas which are always characterised by *grah, amsa, nyasa, mandra sadava, audava, sampurna* etc., are born of *sadjagramma* (i.e. the gamut).

Desi sangita

The above makes it clear that *desi sangita* is also bound by various rules, like present-day classical music. But it must be remembered that, according to Matanga, it is not *alapadi-nibaddha.* That is, it would be the same thing if present-day Dhrupad and Khyal (i.e. classical songs in the two formal styles) were not sung with flourishes of *sura,* but with plain divisions of *asthayi, antara, sanchari* and *abhoga* (that is the basic, the transitional, the developed and the return portions of the melody). This type of song could be sung without violating any of the rules of the Raginis. But this rule does not apply in the case of classical music. In other words, it can be said that songs in any of the regional languages of India are *desi* songs, and when these songs are sung according to the modes of ancient *marga sangita,* they are called 'classical Indian songs'. According to historians, Dhrupad was once well-known as a *desi* style of song in the Gwalior region. Singers imbued with the ideals of *marga sangita* made it follow those ideals, and transformed Dhrupad into what is now known as our classical music. In the eighteenth century, talented composers like Sadarang and Adarang the descendants of Tansen introduced Khyal by remodelling the *Zikr* or *Kawali*—a type of prevalent *desi* song in the ancient pattern of the *marga sangita.* Tappa formerly used to be sung by camel-drivers of the Punjab. The same songs were afterwards transformed into classical Hindi songs because of encouragement given by classical singers. Thumri, too, was once an outcast in the repertoire of noted exponents of classical Hindustani music. Only

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those songs which are not sung according to the ideals of ancient *gayaki* or style of classical singers, are denied recognition today as classical songs.

Though the ancient *marga* and *desi sangita* differed, according to old Sanskrit texts, yet they were never antagonistic or separate in nature. One enriched the other. Whenever the tune of some *desi* song sounded pleasing to the ears of classical singers, they took it up then and there, annalysed it, found its fundamental structure, i.e., its *arohi, avarohi, vadi, vivadi, samvadi-svara, pakara* etc., and placed it among the Ragas and Raginis with a given name. Thus, by knowing the structure of *desi* tunes, it was easy to sing them according to the system of *alapa,* or in the style of Khyal. Again, it has been seen that the Ragas and Raginis composed with the help of *desi* tunes have encouraged composers of pure *desi* tunes in other ages. At that time they did not sing the Ragini with ornamentation like professional Ustads, but used only as much as was required for the words of the songs. Therefore, it is clear that the same tune or Ragini can be placed in the group of *marga* or *desi sangita* according to the style in which it is sung.

Similarities

Just as we find the use of two and four stanzas in Dhrupad and Khyal, so we notice the same in the *desi* songs of different languages. In this respect, no difference can be seen between the two systems. It is the *desi sangita* which is responsible for the division of stanzas that is now prevalent in classical Indian music. Many *talas* or time-beats of classical Indian songs are also derived from this type of *desi* song.

For many years the songs of Bengal have developed according to the ideal of the *desi sangita.* In Bengali songs, abstract music like *alapa,* was never encouraged. Bengal preferred to adorn words rather than the tunes. They did not use words as mere props for showing off the supremacy of Raginis or melodies. That is why we find that Dhrupad, Khyal, Tappa and Thumri, which were composed in Bengali in close imitation of classical Hindi or Hindustani songs,

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had an easier and simpler form of *gayaki* that gave prominence to the words. Perhaps that is the reason why Bengali songs modelled on Dhrupad, Khyal, Tappa and Thumri did not find favour with the exponents of classical music, Bengali or otherwise.

Using the terms of classical Indian music, we can say that the songs of Gurudeva Rabindranath are composed in the style and form of *desi sangita.* In other words, the various emotions expressed by the words in his verses were set to tunes by Gurudeva to make them more telling. Thus trills and flourishes did not figure prominently in his songs. As they are composed in the style of *desi* songs, they have been welcomed by all strata of Bengali society.

During the process of setting his own songs to music in various rhythms, Gurudeva was helped to a great extent by classical Hindustani Ragas, Raginis and *talas.* Still, the style of singing remains simple, as in *desi* songs. No amplification of Raginis is allowed. Some of his songs are based on classical Ragas and Raginis, but the Bengali style of singing transforms the originals completely.

Appreciation of music

As both the singing and listening for pleasure of classical Raga *sangita* requires long training, it is difficult for the general public to appreciate. To surmount this difficulty, *desi* songs are composed in different provinces of India with the help of classical Raginis. The songs of Gurudeva have greatly helped music-lovers of Bengal in this respect. Through the medium of his songs he has been able to help people to appreciate classical Raginis without going through arduous professional training.

Though the chief inspiration of his songs came from classical Hindi or Hindustani Music, Gurudeva had a specially tender corner in his heart for the tunes or melodies which can be called Bengal's very own. He picked up tunes and rhythms from the different strata of Bengali society, and gave them an honoured place in his songs. These songs, in a variety of form and style are now winning the hearts of music lovers. Gurudeva's songs have helped a good deal

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in removing the contempt which classical musicians of Bengal had for these types of songs.

As I have mentioned earlier, in the older days classical Hindi music had enriched its store of Ragas and Raginis by collecting material from *desi* songs. In the same way exponents of classical music can profit from the tunes of Gurudeva's songs. Some of these tunes were created by the combinations of different Raginis in classical music. In many songs, Bengali *desi* tunes and folk music are mingled with classical Ragas and Raginis. If classical musicians could take up these tunes and, like the geniuses of old, analyse them and find their fundamental structure, then they would surely add to the wealth of our classical Ragas and Raginis. Perhaps these Raginis would find a place in the *uttama* or the highest class, according to the sage Matanga. I feel that they can be sung in the style of *alapa*. Rabindranath also composed some new *talas*. Now it is up to the exponents of classical music to adopt them in their system by adding various rhythmical embellishments.

Varied themes

Another special feature of the songs of Gurudeva is their great variety of subject-matter. If we analyse individually the songs of those composers who have become famous in Bengal during the last two hundred years, it will be found that their subject-matter is much less varied. Most of them composed songs on only two or three themes. But even within that narrow compass, they were not equally successful. Perhaps he who succeeded in love-songs failed in devotional ones; while another who may have shone in devotional songs was unsuccessful with love-songs. Gurudeva is an exception. His songs are not confined to just two or three subjects. They are varied in their themes, and most of them conform to the highest standard. Why mention Bengal alone? In their range of subject-matter, the songs of Gurudeva form a class apart compared with those of any other Indian composer. We do not know of any single composer in India who has applied so many Ragas and Raginis or melodies to songs of such varied emotions

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and sentiments as well as situations in nature and the life of man.

Songs of religious or spiritual sentiment, songs of different aspects of love, patriotic and seasonal songs, heroic songs, together they constitute a vast treasure in the storehouse of Bengali songs. In addition to all these, it can be said with confidence that by composing six full length music-dramas (operas), *Valmki-Pratibha, Kal-Mrigaya, Mayar Khela, Chitrangada, Shyama* and *Chandalika,* he has ushered in a new era in the history of Indian music. The time has not yet come for us to evaluate fully the consummate creative power he has shown in the composition of these music-dramas. He has also composed songs of play, of movement, of the road, of birth, marriage and death, of consolation, of laughter, of sowing and reaping, of house-warming, of tree-planting, of a new year beginning and the old year ending; all the different functions and festivities in our daily life are celebrated in his songs. In short, he has beautified the drab day-to-day life of Bengal with the charmed melody of his songs.

Artistic creations

To end, I shall describe the creative process which inspired the songs composed by Rabindranath. Among all his artistic creations, music gave him the greatest joy. He was an inspired devotee of the Muses. That inspiration never failed him in his 63-year long musical life.

In no other country, perhaps, has the meaning or the purpose of music been realised so profoundly as it was done by our ancient thinkers and writers. The Vedic seers, we are told, were in the habit of meditating to find out how music originates, why it moves the heart, fills the soul with an indefinable ecstasy, and makes the mind wistful without any cause whatsoever. Going deep down within the self, they found that "there pulsates all through, a rhythm of *prana* (or life-breath) deep within the universe, and music is nothing but its resultant emotion, intimately felt within our heart". They likewise came to know that "all human life is nothing but a song set to the tune of Eternity; that

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of the sun, moon, the stars and the planets, plants and trees as well, each and every part contributes its unique note to the cosmic song." We find that from time immemorial, this unique *sadhana,* or way of attainment has been practised in India, without a break. The greatest exponent of this *sadhana* in our own time was Gurudeva Rabindranath. He pursued the same path which the ancient seers had sought, and found his deliverance in music itself.

The term *sadhana* applied to Gurudeva Rabindranath carries its own significance, for, though he had learned from great Ustads in his early days, he never became an Ustad himself like other composers. He did not take to composing merely to invent something new. Nor did he compose his songs driven by any worldly ambition, lured by the possibility of name and fame. His songs welled up out of an inmost feeling of joy, impelled solely by an inherent impulse to sing. That is why his songs bear the mark of creation. Anyone who has come into the slightest contact with Gurudeva Rabindranath knows how constant, how deep and intense was the inspiration of music in him.

Inspired compositions

Even in his later days, we had occasion to observe the great artist in his moods of creation when, surcharged as he was with inspiration, he would go on composing songs, one after another. He never felt either the need of instrumental accompaniment or that of preliminary exercises in Raga and Raginis. Long forgotten tunes which he had once learnt in his youth would come flocking to him like a troupe of playful children from quite unknown regions of his mind. Set to song, they seemed strange and new but Rabindranath was never apologetic or felt that any corrections were necessary. He was glad that a new form had emerged out of a combination of word and melody. At times, his absorption was so complete that tunes which came to him unbidden, having fulfilled their purpose, would disappear as unexpectedly, without leaving any trace behind. They, moreover, did not wholly observe the rules of technical treatises on classical music when they came. On the whole,

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the composition of a song was not a task that he set himself. The singer that dwelt in the poet's heart inspired him and made him sing.

Often enough, he would lose his sleep at night and wake up to a tune that came floating from somewhere to his inner ear. He could never sleep again till he had ensnared that bird of paradise in poignant phrases and perfect rhythms. How intense was the feeling of bereavement if by any chance it was lost. Days of rain would amass clouds of music on the summits of his mind, and these, like peacocks, would spread their tails and begin to dance. The world, bathed in light and washed with dew in early autumn, would profoundly stir his mind, and he could express his feeling only through his songs. The cool and deep shadow of death over the sky and the earth of winter would likewise demand expression in his songs, to say nothing of spring whose sense of gladness made him utterly ecstatic. Numerous songs bear witness to the fact. The summer in its scorching severity sang to him the song of the Sanyasins and he would tune up his instrument to its relentless pitch. Morning, evening, noon and night, either in the unfathomable depth of darkness or overflowing with the enchantment of moonlight, every phase of day and night would reveal to him one aspect or another of the Absolute Bliss which shines reflected in Nature, and inspire him to sing. The order and discipline that he usually imposed on himself and his daily life, he totally forsook when he was caught in these moods of creativeness.

Hymn of adoration

He could hearken to the hymn of adoration within the very heart of the noise and turmoil of a crowded market. The stars travelling, each one on its lonely track of light, suggested to him the song of the Eternal Traveller, which was his soul. The leaves on the branches of trees, pattered on by wind and rain, were to him strings of the vina played on by the Unseen Musician. Death would ask him to sing the song of joy and fulfilment.

To be brief, Life and Nature, in all their diverse beauty

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and joy, had never before been so intimately felt or so luminously expressed. Let me conclude with the following passage from one of Rabindranath's addresses to his pupils at Santiniketan Asram :

"The vina as a vina has nothing to separate it from other objects : it pours out its music only when the Master is there to play upon it. It is the joy of the Master which is expressed through songs, and gives us joy. The Master is eternally playing his world-vina. But unless my own vina, my heart, responds to it, how am I to glimpse his beatific face, screened and covered if I be with envy, malice, greed, selfishness, enmity and all sorts of discords ? We forget our petty selves when there is music in our life, when we see the Master who plays on the instruments of our heart. Then sorrow does not overwhelm us, loss does not make us poor, and the ultimate meaning of our life is revealed as the joy of the Master. And that realisation is *mukti*.'

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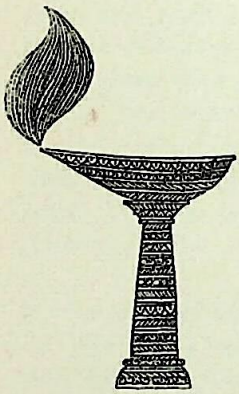
Mulk Raj Anand

PAINTINGS OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE

The paintings of Rabindranath Tagore are important if only because they show that every human being is potentialy a special kind of artist. For here was a great poet who, after half a century's addiction to literature, suddenly in his seventies, began to paint and draw, discovering to his own and other people's astonishment that his scribblings and scratches had a linear rhythm which was integral and pleasing to the eye.



There are some critics, however, who do not find anything very pleasing in Tagore's paintings. And they are inclined to think that the recognition his pictures have received was a kind of charitable concession made to a poet's paintings, just as critics often forgive an artist for having a wife and a mistress at the same time. The general public is also equally puzzled. For instance, I remember an acquaintance of mine who, when confronted with Tagore's drawings, said: "What is there is these? My five-year-old child can draw like that!"

The critics apart, I feel that the

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frankly philistine amateur, who made the last quoted remarks conceded the essence of the truth about Rabindranath's pictures; for, of course, a five-year-old child can and does often draw exactly as did the old poet at seventy-two. And far from such drawing being excusable, it displays a spontaneous feeling and a rhythm which is often lacking in the more self-conscious art of grown-ups who have learnt how to draw from life in the art school and are proud of being able to secure a likeness as near a photograph as possible. Even the most casual survey of a number of children's drawings will reveal in them an imaginative quality far in excess of the academy portrait painter's art. But the inflated self-respect of most adults, prejudiced in favour of the superior wisdom and power of over twenty, is always shocked by such revelations to admit beauty in a mere child's handiwork; and the main springs of artistic activity in the genuine vital feeling for rhythm is seldom understood adequately, thus leading to endless acid controversy in art matters.

Now what exactly do we mean by rhythm? Rhythm is a movement realised and controlled by an artist from the ordinary stuff of life. Take, for example, the art of dancing, where the rhythm of the body is more obviously noticeable than in the plastic arts. The peasant threshing, or the weaver woman at work, perform certain movements and transform them through imagination, so that their various combinations and permutations are recreated in a form which has a life of its own, though it is reminiscent of the raw material from which the impressions were originally taken. What has happened is that the dancer's inherent sense of movement has ordered the hidden life of the peasant or the weaver woman into a peculiar harmony. Perhaps the repressed desires of the dancer, latent in his subconscious, have helped to energise his artistic creation, but the performance makes a new whole, which is like the original reality and yet unlike it. And when presented in this way, the dancer's art communicates to the audience a new beauty—perceived, created and lived.

As is known to those who have some acquaintance with the biography of Rabindranath Tagore, he had early found

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in himself a love for rhythm—rhythm in song, rhythm in words, rhythm in thought. Late in life, when he was correcting proofs and manuscripts, he began to trace the emendations freely into such movements as they would take and thus discovered that he had a feeling for linear rhythm in his hand. The earliest corrections took the form of horizontal scratches which left thin threads of white between the black lines. This black and white design he enclosed in a drawing like that of a cartouche. As the erasures often extended over several lines, the artist took in the words in a preceding sentence or the next, and the next but one sentence, by a scrawl with the back end of his pen till the erasure formed the figure of a snake which had eaten several frogs, or a bird in flight. Of course, as anyone will find who tackles a galley proof in this way, the erasures can flow in many directions and take on different shapes if the inner sense of design is compelling enough. From these rough corrections, the aged child artist developed more complex patterns. Sometimes the black ink began to flow like the river Padma in the cold weather, interspersed with many sandy islands and rivulets, and, at other times, it coursed down like the Ganges at Hughly. These flowing lines began soon to be modelled into shape almost as an oil painter gives weight to the one side of a model's face ; or they began to be formed into arabesques, always growing from the fantasy which was their natural axis, but spreading their evolutionary process towards a picture as in the Bengali alpana creeper designs which proceed whither the artist's inspiration leads them. Thus the movement, generated at any given point, had no check, except the artist's own sense of harmony. But the inherent rhythm was sufficiently organic in Tagore's lines to give even his earliest efforts distinctive patterns, often without form.

Nor is there anything self-consciously poetical and literary about this primitive art. For the kind of metaphor which Tagore used in his poem is completely eschewed in his paintings. Whereas, in the role of a poet, he had a vision—a mental picture before his mind's eye—as a painter, the old man trusted his hand and, pushed his pen along

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whither it would go. That it often went to form a design is proved by the fact that, as in Gertrude Stein's prose, certain words are created by the inspired muscular tension of the hand itself, so certain lines tended to create harmonious pictures in the free drawings of Tagore and to accentuate rhythmic form. That is to say, wherever the pen wandered like 'one who walks in dream on perilous paths' it gathered up the various strokes on the page into an ultimate design which seemed, under the impress of Tagore's genius, to be the only one possible in the circumstances. Of course, not every line was infallible. In fact many did not get anywhere and had to be abandoned. Or they formed into patterns which were stiff and hard and unbending. But this was mainly so in the transitional period, when he was experimenting. And even here there was a tenderness in the individual lines, which was destined to achieve a supple grace and help the evolution of his art.

In a charming and humorous apology for his excursion into the realm of painting, Tagore confirms my analysis of the process of his discovery in words which are very important to the understanding of his development: "I had come to know that rhythm gives reality to that which is desultory which is insignificant in itself. And, therefore, when the scratches in my manuscript cried, like sinners, for salvation and assailed my eyes with the ugliness of their irrelevance, I often took more time in rescuing them into a merciful finality of rhythm than in carrying on what was my obvious task.... In the process of this salvage work I came to discover one fact, that, in the universe of forms, there is a perpetual activity of natural selection in lines and only the fittest survive, which has in itself the fitness of cadence and I felt that to solve the unemployment problem of the homeless heterogeneous into an interrelated balance of fulfilment, is creation itself."

The modest tone of this preface to his artistic work must not, however, be interpreted to mean that Rabindranath was merely adept at doodling. I have seen a large collection of doodles, significant among which were those of H. G. Wells, a highly ingenious and inspired draughtsman. But,

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in a great deal of doodling, ideological interpretation or representation seems only too obvious. The influence of the photograph, and of the commercial poster, percolates into most metropolitan minds, except those of the artists who deliberately seek release from all that they have learnt in order to give expression to the most spontaneous primitive and innocent reactions of their subconscious world. Tagore's development is much more akin to the latter than to the former.

For, after the stage of connecting various erasures into the shapes of bird's beaks, archipelagoes or snakes, his drawing seems to have gone through a musical phase. In some pictures he seems to let his lines listen to an inner music, so that there is visible the tension of point and counterpoint in the curves of the figures that are forming and we witness some of the rarest equivalent of sound outside Disney. I wonder how unconsciously conscious he was of this intent, because in several figures some children friends of mine immediately recognise the piano. But as he did not even choose to give titles to those earlier pictures, it is no use seeing into them exterior illustrative meanings which he expressly disavowed. They are lines animated by a vital decorative instinct, lovely, sinuous and soft as things are in dreamland, a heightened rendering of the real world of it and yet superior to it.

But before long Tagore began to give names to his pictures, and it is quite obvious that the artist had begun to gather the various threads of his technique and was creating designs which have constant external resemblances. Of course, the starting point is the same as in the earliest erasures, and the pictures are archetypal in character. For instance, Tagore's vultures and crows and pelicans and doves, or his human beings and flowers are in no sense representational, but transformations of his instinctive reactions, symbols of his linear rhythm, expressions of his sense of plastic form. If it were not that the term 'abstract' has come to be a term of abuse, I would like to characterise them as such. Only as I have pointed out above, I do not mean to imply that Tagore's ideographs have lost all sense

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of reality. Rather it seems to me, that growingly his ideograph becomes more and more concrete, because the painter now includes within the orbit of his tactile and motor experience certain immediate visual stimuli. But often, it remains the intense expression of his experience of inner reality. The selection of the sense data is economical and everything is subject to the rhythms which satisfy his own psychological needs, rooted in physiological rhythms which ultimately dictate the plastic expression of his figures and to which the associational constituents of the picture supply the outer clothing.

That the title or the literary content is however merely an added grace, and not the plastic essential is clear from the fact that, starting from premises quite integral to his own temperament, Rabindranath Tagore reaches conclusions in his search for rhythm not very different from his European contemporaries. For instance, his lovely head of a girl is so like the egg shape heads of girls painted by Amedeo Modgiliani and several of his pictures are reminiscent of Sonasier Rousseau, thus proving that the basis of aesthetic appreciation of the art of the various people of the world is nowadays derived from a sensitiveness which is, to a large extent, free from photography and local custom. It would almost seem as though the inherent logic of plastic expression is found in response to rhythm, whether this rhythm be linear, of colour composition or surface floor and that the collective unconscious of an epoch can embrace places as distant as Bolpur, Bengal, and a studio in Paris or New York. But those who know how the most sensitive minds of our age have seen through the bluff of so-called 'civilisation', and respond to myth and fantasy like the simple so-called primitive peoples, will know that the coincidence of their techniques are nothing very surprising.

In this context, it is interesting to note that about the same time as Tagore began to experiment with his ideographs and matured a style like Modgiliani's another poet, the Spaniard, Frederico Garcia Lorca, drew pictures which independently approached the same ideals as those of Salvador Dali, and the English novelist D. H. Lawrence

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found himself suddenly possessed by a demon which expressed itself in a set of the most vivid coloured paintings born of the new freedom he sought in a fresh medium. The technical range of all these painters is necessarily limited and they remain curiosities of the art world, but the lesson which the bursting of the hidden springs of their genius teaches us is that the human race is potentially much richer and would give us a great deal more beauty if only the mute are given the opportunities to paint freely. Painting, like poetry, it seems, will out like murder once the inner depths have been touched.

The image I have used in the last sentence will, of course, be turned against me by those who in their impatience to judge a painting apart from the tests of imitation of nature and the outer literary associations, will say of Tagore's paintings, as they say of Piccasso's : "Is it art or is it double talk ?" But the 'new' in art is always contaminated by the 'old'—which was itself the 'new' of yesterday. If however, the fundamental fact be grasped that the common denomination of all art, whether that of the child prodigies, or Van Gogh, or Piccasso, or Tagore or Miro and Masson, is that man is rhythm, we may begin to train our eyes to look for symbols of the true language of art and not merely lose ourselves in the cuter disguises of dead habit.

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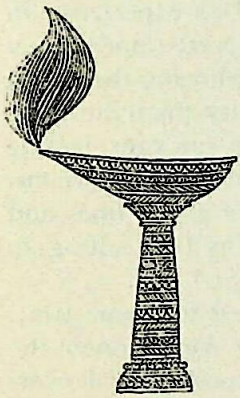
Sigurdur A. Magnusson, *Iceland*

TAGORE AND HIS CONCEPT OF DEATH

Since I cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be included in the category of Tagore scholars, this piece is probably misplaced in the present volume. I offer it at the request of the editors, not as a contribution to the Tagore studies which many competent scholars have carried out, but as a personal tribute and a testimony of gratitude from an admirer in the far North.



My first acquaintance with Tagore was quite fortuitous and, one might say, superficial. In my very young days I was browsing through books in a library in Reykjavik, when suddenly I came upon a book with strange, incomprehensible words, at the front of which I found a picture of an old man which instantly engaged me. Those luminous eyes, and the serene, saintly beauty of the face, framed as it was by great waves of white hair and beard, lit my childish phantasy. Who was that holy man? Was there perhaps a new Christ somewhere out in the big world? (Some vague rumours to that effect had reached my ears.) I did not get any answer to my secret enquiries, for the words under

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the picture were even stranger than the face: Rabindranath Tagore. But the image of the man remained within me and the two words had somehow imprinted themselves on my memory.

Many years passed. I went to school and began learning foreign languages. Then one day as I passed a book shop in Reykjavik, my glance suddenly caught the old familiar name on a book-cover in the window. Short of funds as I always was, I still did not hesitate to buy the book and take it to the attic I used for living quarters. It was a neat little volume with a curiously musical and mysterious name: *Gitanjali.*

My knowledge of English was at a very primitive stage, but I started reading the lines and savouring their contents. Far from comprehending the profound meaning of the text, indeed often missing the literal meaning of whole phrases, I still did *sense* the unfamiliar and strangely beautiful world which breathed through the lines.

It was, paradoxically, a kind of 'psychosomatic' experience of Tagore's extremely spiritual poetry. (I suppose many youths can testify to the same kind of experience in their encounters with forceful but only partly understood writing, their own inflamed imagination endowing the occult parts of the text with even greater intensity than the parts which are comprehended.) There was an uncanny feeling down the spine, a wonder a sudden release of some dormant inner forces which found expression in the poet's lines and came to the surface. I felt elated. It was like falling in love for the first time.

This early 'fliration' with Tagore lasted for some time. In moments of loneliness or depression I would open the book and let the mind fly to those southern shores of flowers and rivers, heavy rains and parching heat, lutes and conch shells, where the 'holy man' of my childhood had discovered the inseparable union of life and death: "And now I am eager to die into the deathless." "I am like a remnant of a cloud of automun uselessly roaming in the sky, O my sun everglorious! Thy touch has not yet melted my vapour, making me one with thy light, and thus I count months and

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years separated from thee." "And because I love this life, I know I shall love death as well." How strange these words sounded! How filled with wisdom and peace of mind! The very qualities most lacking in a young man about to set sail for the rough seas of life.

With my further studies in world literature the initial rapture was tempered by a more sober and circumspect judgment of Tagore's work. (This entails a loss as well as a gain, the mind taking over some of the ecstatic domain of the soul.) I became better acquainted with his work and read about his very remarkable life. I was staggered by the versatility of that great spirit which was all in one: poet, playwright, novelist, short story writer, essayist, lecturer, orator, composer, singer, painter, actor, stage director and leader of his people: in short, a gigantic symbol of modern Indian culture in all its ramifications. No single man, so far as I am aware, has to such an extent become the complex image of his nation to the outside world—not even the Mahatma himself, though he is undeniably one of the few outstanding figures in world history. It is, indeed, an outstanding fact that India should have produced in one generation two men of such stature as Gandhi and Tagore, while the rest of the world was practically barren of truly great men (I should except such people as Albert Schweitzer, Romain Rolland, Toyohiko Kagawa, Simone Weil, Henry Miller and perhaps a few others endowed with varying degrees of greatness). It may, of course, be argued that great events make great men and that the Indian soil was ripe for them during the great struggle for emancipation and national independence, but then, that is only part of the story. The other part is that truly great men are extremely rate in any circumstance and their emergence does not of necessity coincide with great events.

I said that my initial rapture had been tempered by a wider reading of Tagore's work and that of other authors. This statement has to be qualified by the fact that I only know his work in English translations which are known to have lost a great deal of the quality of the original. Moreover, my reading has been haphazard, so that the impressions

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gathered are fragmentary and no doubt misleading. Some of his work I have found repetitious (a famous complaint), but that may well be due to my inability to see the forest for the trees, i.e., my inability to see his work in its totality. Lacking intimate knowledge of the circumstances and atmosphere in which Tagore created his work, I am bound to judge by standards that are at once foreign and unfair. Any work or literature, taken out of its culture, social and historical context, is unfairly treated—unless it be timeless, which some of Tagore's works undeniably are.

Even if my personal taste finds fault with the repetitions and the sameness of the symbols and images in Tagore's poetry (probably due to the fact that I am a 'modern' experimenting poet), I am deeply stirred by its great lyrical beauty and its profound 'philosophical' significance. To me his poetry is the testament of a great visionary who looked at life with serenity. His poems are echoes from a distant world, caressing our ears that have grown tired (almost to the point of deafness) of the tumult of our violent age, where simplicity has been lost in precious sophistication, bred by our insecurity, bewilderment and fears. We in the West seem to be losing all orientation in the world, we fumble around grasping at sensations, fads and half-truths which bring us constant unrest and inspire ever-new doubts. What a soothing experience for our restless selves to turn to Tagore and find in his work a *total* view of man and his predicament in the universe. It is irrelevant whether we agree with all his beliefs or conclusions. What is important is the experience of discovering a new 'map' of the whole human and divine order, however faulty it may be. It is like reading the Gospels or Dante or the teachings of the Buddha. It gives us fresh orientation and helps us find our own path through the jungle of existence. For I am of the conviction that it is for each individual ultimately to draw up his own 'map' of the human landscape. What I mean to say is that one man's total view of the human situation need not to be accepted in full, but can still be of invaluable importance in helping us to get our own view into focus.

When I refer to Tagore's *total view,* I do not mean to

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imply that I find no discrepancies or dissonances in his outlook. Dissonances there are, otherwise he would probably not have been compelled to write his works. The lines quoted above, "And because I love this life, I know I shall love death as well," present on the surface a complete conciliation of the two opposites in human existence, but such utterances can, I feel, only spring from an intense struggle in the poet's soul between the two adverse forces. To my mind, artistic creation is the spark lit when two opposing forces clash.

The clash of opposites in Tagore's soul is perhaps not so obvious in *Gitanjali* as in his last poems, published in English under the title *Wings of Death,* and it becomes glaringly obvious when we compare the two books. Compare the fragments quoted above from *Gitanjali* to the following fragments from *Wings of Death,* picked at random :

"When I see Man
Helpless within the walls
Of his unbearable suffering
I do not know
Where he will find consolation.

Towards what nameless, anguished
Moves this triumphal journey
Seeking the end of suffering?

The flame, which at the beginning
Rises from the Void
And at the end
Encounters meaningless death,
Illumines the interval
And gives it significance."

The clash between hope and despair, doubt and conviction, love of life and acceptance of death, these are the ingredients in his last poems, and his vision of existence is truer and more whole for their being there. I think a careful reading of his poems will reveal many other dissonances which add colour and truth to his own vision, life being too complex to be woven into a single, smooth pattern.

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Note for example the almost Nietzschean preoccupation with Man Supreme, Man the conqueror of himself and the world on the one hand, and on the other, the strangely Whitmanian delight in the huge gathering of humanity working and fulfilling their various needs, without, it seems, any bother about the great questions of life and death (Poem No. 6 in *Last Poems,* and No. 10 in *Recovery).* I have a feeling that both these images fascinated Tagore and pulled him in opposite directions.

This only amounts to saying that Tagore's 'total view' of human existence was a complex one, and in its complexity lies one of the proofs of its validity. The complexity of his view was obviously intimately connected with his character, where opposing forces and desires were constantly at work (note for example his craving for solitude and his passion for active life, his surrender to poetic imagination and his fascination with science). All those opposing forces, which probably constituted the seed of his poetic genius, were instrumental in creating one of the most impressive personalities of the modern age.

An Icelantic friend of mine, who in his young days studied in Copenhagen, has told me of the immense effect Tagore's personality had on the students in Copenhagen when he was honoured by a torchlight procession on his visit there in 1911. "He was like a holy man come down from his hermitage in the Himalayas to great his fellow men. I shall always remember how he lifted his hands with quiet majesty and greeted us as if bringing us blessings from Heaven."

Such is the image I like to keep in my mind of that strange and complex symbol of modern India, Rabindranath Tagore.

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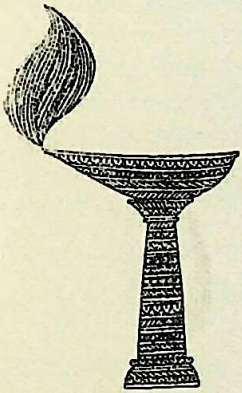
José Maria Peman, *Spain*

INVOCATION FROM SPAIN

I am going to speak to you, Tagore
From Spain with a fiery love
with a sun that will retrace its steps.

From India, where there are no merlons
and where it is all meadows and woods
your voice filled the Earth
with an immense love.

Spain is a land of ramparts
India is a land of fields and open cities
where the wind passes from trees to the streets
just as the soul passes from meditation to poetry.
Here Nature is isolate,
There Nature is frank and gifted.



Come in, you Poet, come here
through the strong merlons of Avila and Burgos
come slyly like a dread or a watchword;
come in, O the lyric expanse of Ghazipur,
of Santiniketan, and of the vast Bolpur
where the wind holds firmly on the swinging trunks
like a crazy man, sentimental and drunk.

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Very few but the best are awaiting you.
Gil Vicente, the poet with a broken heart
who speaks of roses and nightingales
waits for you.

The irrepressive sadness
which made Cid weep
when he left Burgos to go into exile
waits for you.

And the great love of Santa Teresa of Avila
waits for you
inside the stones of the ramparts.

And, in short, all the unknown modesty
of a veiled Spain, which has never sung
all that it felt
waits for you.
Because there is something precious like stones
under your winds and my winds
the folk sayings
the couplets of lovers
the humbleness of the poor
and the poverty itself
without tears or criet !

Therefore, you Poet,
did not take Bengal or the rivers
for your poetry and meditation
but that of the vast barren plain,
which never smiles.

The Castilla, the dry land taken out of India,
one among those few skulls
undressed by this Planet,
so that the solitary poets
may dress them again
with the flesh of their contemplation.

Therefore, we listen to you,
because we really need your peace and tenderness.
God filled with infinite music
the straight reed of your body.

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Did you feel shy to be a poet
before the Poet,
who made the poem of this world!

Your poems are the voice of your soul
like the moanings of the boards
on the ship of Life.

Therefore, you understood
that the children open themselves
inside out just as the roses do.

What a crime it is
that men committed
to forget that the great man of tales
is fasting for those who will come!

Because that wise man who
only knows the world,
on knowing it,
and will never know it fully.

Who has given to the man of the West
the order to dominate Nature?
why to dominate it, why?
Is she not our friend?
She who wraps up all of us
in the arms of waters
and green branches.

You taught the men
their relation with rivers
their friendship with the woods.

You rubbed out the word 'Possession'
and wrote 'Union' over it,
as if a flock of tender doves
was passing over the group of flying crows.

Because we are not simply men,
we are men amongst things
we are the communicating devotees
of the whole Universal!

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India has paid millions of victories
for wheels and steel
for pistons and chains
for the sake of her slow and peaceful
possession of herself.

Because I carry within me the flame,
but I myself am not the flame,

I am nothing.

Truth is the sum-total of very many facts,
but it is more than the 'sum-total'.

It is new fact that increases our being,
just as the perfume is the sum-total
of thousand flowers
but it is not a flower;

It is a new vaporuy creation
With invisible and delightful entrails.

You spoke in sweet verse
how perfection is dressed up in Beauty,
so that the imperfect
may understand and love it.

Your verse is like the cry
which you send forth to us
from the other shore,
so that we may listen to you.

But your shore is much farther away
than the verse which reaches us !

Your verse comes from joy itself
from the motionless Perfection.

You have taught this to me :
The Bad is, O Poet, the bank of my river
thanks to the bank, goes forward.

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Make me suffer, O Imperfection,
on both the muscles,
so that I will be fast as deer
when I flee from your suffering and punishment.

Number, Science, Idea, Word
all cut Nature into pieces,
all give her a burden
which she does not have.

But the torrential stream of Life
goes on and the Bad is always defeated
and Nature is transformed into a shudder
and allusion of something greater and higher.

What is the worth of a dry leaf
if it does not stop the river?

Thanks Rabindranath,
for the tenderness and the greenery
of your verse which damped the stones of the West.

At times, I think that your verse
is perhaps calling us
from the distant Ganges
telling us, "Look, I was here!"

Because you met a sad pilgrim in meditation
and he told you that his sons
had squandered and sold away
his ancestoral properties and grape gardens
and then he added in your ear,
"My name is Jesus."

Translated from Spanish by M. R. Bhatia.

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TRIBUTES AND HOMAGE

HOMAGE FROM UNESCO

Vittorino Veronese
Director-General, UNESCO

Rabindranath Tagore, philosopher, educator, novelist, poet and painter, is without challenge one of the greatest and most noble figures of modern times. Not only was he awarded the rare honour of the Nobel Prize for Literature, but he also won the distinction, far more rare, less spectacular, but even more significant, of having his works translated into different languages by writers of equal glory, Nobel Prize winners in their own right, such as André Gide in French and Juan Ramon Jiménez in Spanish.

India today does not celebrate merely the birth centenary of the thinker and writer. Above all India reveres Tagore's generous, universal soul, open to the problems not only of his own land but of the world, the son of the Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, who had been one of the guiding spirits of the Brahmo Samaj. For one of his greatest works, the monumental novel *Gora,* Rabindranath was to choose as the theme the trials and problems of this movement. It is not merely by chance that UNESCO, among its many undertakings towards the celebration of Tagore's Centenary, has decided to publish the first French translation of this very novel. For in this book the poet stresses with great fervour and by moving scenes depicted with all his skill as a writer, his zealous devotion to the ideal of a casteless world, a world without cruel, irrational discrimination between one human being and his fellow. His hero, Gora, cries out: "It is you who are my mother. The imaginary mother whom I long sought during my wandering and vagabonding was sitting at home, waiting before my own room. You have no caste, you make no distinction between men, you know

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no hatred, you give flesh to nothing but the good that is in all of us. It is you who are India." And then come these words of Gora, which one might well apply to Tagore himself: "No longer is there opposed within me the Hindu, Moslem and Christian. Today all foods are my food." For indeed Tagore took nourishment from what all the world had to offer, and his message of mutual understanding and tolerance is directed far beyond the boundaries of India, to all cultures and to all men.

A message of freedom too, not merely freedom for oneself, but for all: "He who wishes freedom for himself," he affirmed, "yet fears freedom for his neighbour, is not worthy of freedom."

It is only fitting that the entire globe should unite with India in rendering solemn homage to a man whose glory ennobled indissolubly both his own country and the world.

Writing days after Tagore's death in August 1941, Jawaharlal Nehru said: "Both Gurudev and Gandhiji took much from the West and from other countries, especially-Gurudev. Neither was narrowly national. Their message was for the world." Tagore was in truth a living link between East and West. And so he willed it. His entire life he fought against narrow distrust of foreign cultures. He had faith in the fruitfulness of cultural intercourse and friendship. With this message he was and remains a Guru to UNESCO, and it is both fitting and imperative that UNESCO'S bomage to Tagore should join that of the rest of mankind.

GREETINGS FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Dusan Zbavitel

Head of the Indological Department, Oriental Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Prague.

It is a matter of great honour and pleasure for me to greet, on behalf of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, this seminar of the All-India Bengali Literary Conference, for whose meritorious activities I have always had a deep regard. The fact that its present session forms the beginning

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of Rabindranath Tagore's Centenary celebrations, adds a tint of solemnity to this meeting. Let me, a foreigner by birth, but a true Bengali in the core of my heart, use this opportunity to express all the admiration and love which the people of Czechoslovakia have for the greatest Indian poet. This admiration and love have their long tradition. Therefore a special Tagore Centenary Committee was established by the Czechoslovak Government as early as in 1958, and the preparation so far made give us the best hopes that the year 1961 will bring about not only a further increase of interest in Rabindranath's writings in our country, but also a further strengthening of the ties of friendship between India and Czechoslovakia.

GREETINGS FROM THE UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC

RIAD ELETR

It is a great pleasure and privilege for me to be in the midst of such a distinguished gathering, in my capacity as the representative of my country the United Arab Republic and on behalf of the Supreme Council of Arts and Literature, and the cultural societies and litterateurs of the U.A.R. on this occasion of celebrating the anniversary of the famous poet, writer, artist, thinker, philosopher and educationist, Rabindra Nath Tagore. I wish to avail of this opportunity to convey to you the best wishes and cordial greetings of the United Arab Republic. I also hope that efforts would be made for bringing about closer and greater co-operation between not only the littérateurs of the two countries but also amongst the masses of U.A.R. and India.

Not only does India or the Indians know the great Tagore. His is a universal name, loved and respected. Many of his works have been translated in many countries of the world in different languages. Tagore was, indeed, a magnetic and international personality and it must not be surprising to tell you that he is as such respected and liked

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in the U.A.R. as perhaps in India or anywhere else. The dissemination, through translations, of Tagore's literary and philosophical works in other languages, has greatly helped in enriching the literature of many countries. His realistic approach to life, the style of his writings, the delicate philosophy it contains, carry an immense sensitivity and a great and unparalleled breadth of vision. His desire for the realisation of the noble dream of international fraternity, and the Universal Man, his intense love for humanity, carry food for thought even today after so many years when he is no more with us. In other words, we realise that we appreciate his ideas and philosophy in a much greater sense from day to day. Through his magnetic personality and philosophical writings he succeeded in introducing the true culture of the East to the West, and acquainted the East too with the good aspects and elements of the Western culture.

There is almost a feverish keenness in the U.A.R. for Tagore, and programmes for celebrating the Tagore Centenary during May 1961 are under way. A Committee, consisting of some of the well-known U.A.R. littérateurs, has been formed for this purpose and is headed by the Ministry of Education. This Committee has chalked out an elaborate programme. This includes, among others the holding of a Tagore Festival Week with an exhibition of Tagore paintings and works by and on Tagore; organising a series of University lectures; the issuance of a Tagore bibliography; the publication of a three-volume introductory work in Arabic on the life, work, ideals and philosophy of Tagore; staging of some Tagore plays and the recital of Tagore music.

TRIBUTE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF PARIS

It is a pleasure and privilege for the University of Paris to participate in the celebration of the hundredth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore's birth.

The University of Paris is happy to pay fervent homage to the great writer and great humanist. Humanism is

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indeed the best word suited to define Tagore's work. In the vast movement which for the last hundred years has renewed all the Indian traditions and which is aptly called the Renaissance of Hindooism, Tagore played a most prominent part. Others have had a greater taste for action, others may have gone further in the way of spiritual research. But he, more than any other, understood that such a renewal should proceed from the bringing together and harmonising of the ideal of the East and of the West. His object was precisely to create that modern humanism which bears within itself the deepest forces of the human being to whom nothing that is beautiful, great and noble is unknown. Of this total humanity, Tagore was himself a model. An incomparable poet, subtle novelist, a dramatist, a versatile artist, he was also a philosopher and a thinker engaged on the social and political problems of his time. One sometimes thinks of Leonardo da Vinci when one calls to mind his work and the many echoes it had. It is the pride of our country to have been among the first in Europe to have discovered him. Almost all his works have been translated into French, supported as they were by the warm and active sympathy of such great French writers as André Gide and Pièrre Jean Jouve.

The University of Paris can by no means forget that Tagore was the founder of several colleges and modern institutes at Santiniketan. There, he intended to bring about the blending of the different tendencies and the techniques inherited from the West which give that University its particular character. Today, Santiniketan is only one among the universities of the Indian State, the Tagore's mark is still to be seen there.

When the Institut de Civilisation Indienne of our University gave the poet solemn reception on his last visit to Europe in 1930, as Sylvain Levi welcomed him on behalf of both professors and students, Tagore kindly recalled that a few years before he attended the lectures given by the French orientalist at Santiniketan under the shady trees of its incomparable park. But, on the other hand, Sylvain Levi returned, what tribute of gratitude is owed by all the

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students of the world to the illustrious Indian who, better than any other, knew how to translate into imperishable forms the universal aspirations of the soul of beauty.

GREETINGS FROM THE UNION OF CZECHOSLOVAK WRITERS, PRAGUE.

Ivan Skala, First Secretary.

We, the Czechoslovak writers use the occasion of your Conference to send you warm and brotherly greetings. Be assured that we hold you in high esteem knowing that a great thing—the happiness of India and peace all over the world is your most precious concern.

And that is why the heritage of your great artist, the world known writer Rabindranath Tagore, whose Centenary is being remembered together with you by the whole peace-loving cultural world, is so dear to you.

This jubilee has a very important cultural significance even for our country, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic which has deep friendly feelings to your native country. Your great culture, classical as well as contemporary, has always found and finds today a great many readers and admirers. The popularisation of Tagore's work meets therefore in Czechoslovakia with lively interest. Rabindranath Tagore had in our country not only lots of readers but also enthusiastic interpreters and personal friends, among whom let us mention at least the Academician Professor Lesny, the translator of Tagore's work and author of essays and monographs on the great poet. The late Professor Lesny has today his own pupils and followers who continue the work started by him.

In Tagore's books translated and published in our country already 45 years ago, we appreciate especially the author's untiring and passionate effort for a better life of the Indian people, his honest and straightforward struggle against everything that oppresses his people. We are well

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aware of the fact that Tagore attacked several times the enemies of his people, the colonisers, that he could well discern, who is his real friend. In decisive moments of the history of Europe and the whole world, Tagore quickly and precisely understood what a deadly threat to humanity fascism was. Because of that he did not hesitate to stand up against this evil with all the power of his great personality. We never forget that Rabindranath Tagore together with other thinkers and scholars and democrats of this century, took a positive attitude towards the Soviet Union, towards the country, which liberated Czechoslovakia from the fascist yoke.

The artistic and philosophical work of the great reformer Tagore is extremely vast. From its deep sources, as if from the deep sources of life of the Indian people, love to humanity can be felt, respect for interior life of man, for his suffering, for his destiny. Today and especially today, at the time of an ever increasing struggle for peaceful life all over the world, we declare our adherence to Tagore's work, to the author's fight against injustice, perfidy, against war. Together with him we share his conviction, that we must never allow " complete destruction to be mankind's last word."

Dear friends, accept our friendly greetings, which we express on behalf of the common cause of all the peaceloving people. The memory of Rabindranath Tagore will link us in our common effort.

A TRIBUTE FROM BELGIUM

Karel Jonckheere

My country is a small triangle called Belgium. A triangle without sharp corners. Formerly, it had the shape of a heart but history's big feet have trampled and injured it so often that it has become deformed. Whereas India still keeps the form of a heart.

But this loss of shape did not result in a loss of feelings,

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and it is with all my heart that I am speaking, paying tribute to your Thakur whose first name of Rabi or Sun made his father, the Maharshi Devendranath, predict " Later he shall enlighten the world." We all try to enlighten the world, but alas, most of the time on behalf of our own darkness. Instinctively we hope to cut a purer personality for ourselves by exploring others.

We may recall here how Belgium, round about 1720, after one hundred and fifty years of Spanish occupation, was handed over to Austria as part of a heritage, which gave us more freedom and encouraged us to enter into business relations with India. The Ostond Company built along your coasts a couple of factories and tried to create mutual understanding and friendly relationship. Many noteworthy details hereof are found in the suit *Carolus's* logbook. India played, at that time, a very attractive part in many fields. Also the Flemings were attracted by it, the forebears of those who, today, read Tagore for the hundredth time in the hundredth Dutch translation. However, in 1724, they had not read—for the book was only published in 1726—how a friendly man, a doctor Gulliver, lived under the illusion that people elsewhere were better than those at home. He wished to go and live in such a better country. So, as a doctor, he boarded a ship India bound.

India has known a different sort of luck in Belgium than the Belgians in India. Indeed, where we only succeeded in reaching the periphery of your country and in doing material business, two centuries later, a man in his sixties, came to us. The Flemish poets said of him that " his white prophet figure was seen walking on our city squares " bringing a message to the West to make us better through word, song and brotherhood.

In 1921, Rabindranath Tagore was in Antwerp. He was staying there with his old friends, the family De Groodt-Adant. In 1907, he had met Juliette Adant in Oxford, where they were both studying. In 1913 he received the Nobel prize for literature. In 1917, he came to England to defend his country. He saw Lloyd George, but didn't get a chance to see the other ministers; he then retired to

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Glasgow, where, once again, he met the De Groodts. Father De Groodt had fled the Germans and was teaching at Glassgow University. Their friendship became deeper, and after the war, in 1921, Tagore went to live with the De Groodts for six weeks in their Cantecroy Castle in Antwerp.

At that time the arts group 'Cercle Artistique,' Arenberghstraat, was doing well. I was then sixteen and happened to be in Antwerp. I had read Tagore's *Gitanjali* in the translation of the North-Netherlander Frederik van Eeden who became his friend; and I saw Tagore. I was afraid to attend his lecture, I admired him so much that I thought human contact would dim my devotion. Last week, Mrs. De Groodt told me that Tagore, before a suddenly crowded hall, spoke of the communion man-nature, under the title 'Message from the Forest.' He was introduced in English and Dutch by my old friend Mr. Jozef Muls, still alive, a member of the Royal Flemish Academy, Language and Literature.

What once happened in Tokyo did not happen in Antwerp. A Japanese lover of literature created the 'R.T. Friends Circle.' She said, among other things, "Later, all universities of the world will teach Bengali to enable to read the poet's work in its original text." In the Flemish part of the country, the Flemings had to wait too long to have courses in their own language to create one in Bengali.

For the present, we must try to understand Tagore without knowing Bengali. The youngest translation of a great part of his work was done in 1958 and published in the 'Pantheon of Nobel Prize winners for Literature,' edited by Heideland, Hasselt, with an introduction by Dr. Arnold Bake. The book contains 428 pages of poems, stories and plays.

The influence on the Flemish and Dutch, i.e. the Netherlandish expressionist lyricism is clearly felt. The first world war had left with the youth a bitter after-taste of the West, being poisoned by politics and cut off from the real sources of life. Even Christianity hadn't succeeded in maintaining peace. After the war, these young people embarked proudly in the stream of orientalism, which had

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the advantage of being somewhat mysterious, of having older constant values and of remaining into contact with paradisiac nature. The Chinese poets came again into the centre of interest with translations by Klabund and, at the same time, the above mentioned collections of Frederik van Eeden. Thakur himself clad in Eastern dress came to announce the truth in holy, simple words with his charming voice of the East of today.

China, the Bible and Tagore brought about a new poetic climate. The first brings an acceptance of life, a sublime resignation, a removal from the everyday life and reality; the Bible teaches, especially through its psslms, to care for a new, higher exaltation; Tagore brings wisdom, a fresh destiny of life, an enchantment which rises from his image world and, to the West attractive, from the joys of communion between man and creation, without society imposing its tarnishing laws. Tagore succeeded in enlivening with the expressionists, those far offshoots of remanticism, the belief that living together is possible without a too organised society.

He brought the comfort of old certainties and the euphory of new possibilities. Those, who know him properly known that humour is not strange to him and therefore will read Tagore longer than the native idealists would do. Those who reflect even deeply on his work come to the encouraging conclusion that he knew the real veins of life: the surroundings, life itself with its opening and closing fan of actions and reactions and the unknown.

In Belgium, Tagore remains a great poet; in Antwerp, he is not a dead member of the De Groodt's home. Photographs and many letters are kept in his honour.

You probably know, that he never crossed out a word in his writings. He rather encircled it by a mausoleum-drawing. Once he said: "I must give my words a decent tomb." He could do this, they were his words; and where we made these clear, brilliant and valuable words our own, we change the words 'our tomb' to 'our heart'. For in the heart of my country his words blossom regularly.

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GREETINGS FROM THE ACADEMIE FRANCAISE

On the occasion of Rabindranath Tagore's birth centenary, the Académie Francaise associate themselves with the delegations of the literary societies assembled in Bombay to houour the memory of this greater writer and profound thinker of India.

In him, the poet of *Gitanjali* and the founder of Santiniketan, the abode of peace, they herald the imperishable memory of a great devotee of world poetry and of the highest ideals which sustain humanity.

HOMAGE FROM SPAIN

Bilas Pinar Lopez
Director of the Institute of Spanish Culture

If the hometown of people is the word liked by the modern philosophy, we can say that the Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore has come to have an authentic second hometown in Spain where his lyrical works—so rich in imaginative purity—had the fortune to be translated, or better, recreated by the extraordinary translator Sra. Zenobia Camprubi, wife of the Andalusian lyrical genius, Juan Ramon Jiménez.

The words of the poet Rabindranath Tagore, have met with a strong spiritual resonance in the hearts of the Spaniards, and his works have influenced directly the coming generations of Spanish poets who owe to his delicate inspiration a good part of their poetic art.

Because of this familiarity with spiritual creations, near and remote at the same time, of Rabindranath Tagore, we have obligation to honour his memory and express at the time of the first Centenary of his birth, the gratitude Spanish culture owes him. I now convey to you the voice of the children of Spain and all the poets of this land where his words have fused themselves with ours till they have become our own.

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GREETINGS FROM UNITED KINGDOM

Vera Brittain

Rabindranath Tagore was the first of the great triumvirate—Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru—who in this twentieth century have given India a commanding place on the literary and political map of the world. Tagore was a forerunner—as much the morning star of the Indian Revolution as John Wyclif of the English Reformation. It is a privillege to send a message of greeting which will join the many that India will receive in honour of this titanic figure whose greatness was recognised by England in 1912, and has since shone like a beacon light to illuminate international thought and creative art.

* * * *

Oswald P. Milne

Chairman, Royal Society of Arts, United Kingdom

Rabindranath Tagore was a friend of Leonard Elmhirst and used to stay with him at his charming and hospitable home, Dartington Hall, near Totnes in Devonshire.

In the 1930, I was engaged in designing and carrying out a number of buildings on the Dartington Estate and on one or two occasions I met Tagore there during my visits. He was an arresting figure, clothed as he was in a flowing cloak woven from the finest cloth. The beauty of his head was striking and one was impressed by the air of calm repose that emanated from him. His quiet voice lent charm to his conversation.

A MESSAGE FROM CEYLON

Weliwitiye Sorata Nayaka Thero, *Vice-Chancellor, Vidyodaya University of Ceylon*

It is my privilege as leader of the Ceylon Delegation to the Birth Centenary Celebrations of Poet Rabindranath Tagore to congratulate the All-India Bengali Literary Conference on having organised these celebrations with the participation of distinguished men of letters from all over

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the world. No author or philospher of recent times has influenced the literature of our little country more than Rabindranath Tagore. Not only are all his works available in Sinhalese translation but the poems, plays and short stories which have drawn inspiration from works of this great writer are innumerable. It is not an exaggeration to say that Rabindranath Tagore gave Sinhalese poetry a new outlook and a lyricism for which contribution we are ever indebted to the great Bengali poet.

Rabindranath Tagore gave the people of the East a new message of freedom and peace. He inspired the struggle for national independence in all countries of Asia. Thus he was not only a Bengali or an Indian national leader, but a pan-Asian leader of the highest order.

On this occasion we of Ceylon do most respectfully acknowledge our indebtedness to Rabindranath Tagore whose contribution to the national and literary life of our country will be remembered for ever.

SALUATION FROM HOLLAND

Maria Schröder Van Gogh

I am greater than Death . . .

—THE CONQUEROR OF DEATH

This year the thoughts of many in the Netherlands will go back to the year 1920, when we had the great joy of seeing the famous Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore in Amsterdam and of listening to his words. Even in those days Dutch translations of several of his books were to be found in the book-cases of literary-minded Holland.

His lectures made a deep impression on his audiences, and left a warm admiration for the great author, his work as well as for his personality.

In later years that admiration grew more and more, since especially thanks to him, some of the wisdom and beauty of India, and of the way of life of the Indian men and women entered into the mind of the Western world.

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Many of his works have been translated into Dutch, many in our country read the English translations, but I regret profoundly that I cannot read his poetry in the original Bengali. However, also in the translation more than anything else his intense love for human beings and for nature, closely allied, is evident and, while reading, the people of our time are struck by a nostalgic longing for this strong and true solidarity. Yet the thinker Tagore, who like all great men was ahead of his time, was so modern that many of his sayings are as true now as when he wrote them down. His deep longing for real understanding between the Eastern and Western world, resulting in a synthesis between the ideals of East and West, abides in countless hearts.

Gurudev's message

In the hard chaotic world of today it is a privilege to listen to the words written by Gurudev in Santiniketan and addressed to one of his pupils: "Some voice inside me says: All is so good, so good. Who is it, that is sitting in the light of the sky, dissolving all disharmonies into a melody that is so serene, so sweet and so profound. Try always to forget them yourself, then you will be happy in whatever surroundings you may find yourself. Good has stretched out his hands to me through all humanity. He wants my selfless service, my life's devotion, my complaints. My heart should joyously affirm: All is for the best. I need nothing for myself. Through whichever path you will lead me, I will at last arrive at your temple door."

I wish to express the ardent hope, that Rabindranath Tagore will not merely be memorised in words, but that ever more men and women in the whole world will act according to his spirit and his supreme example. That would be the greatest homage that we could possibly pay to him.

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ABOUT THE CONRIBUTORS

Sudhi Ranjan Das

Main President A.I.B.L.C. 36th Session Bombay (1960).

This eminent jurist, who retired full of honours as the Chief Justice of India, had his early education in Santiniketan. Graduating from Calcutta University, he took his LL.B. in London with a first class first. Called to the Bar from Gray's Inn in 1918, Mr. Das returned to India and practised law in Calcutta. For sometime he worked as a lecturer in the University Law College.

Mr. Das was appointed Additional Judge of the Calcutta High Court in 1942 and a Puisne Judge two years later. In 1949, he was made the Chief Justice of the East Punjab High Court and the next year he took his place among the judges of the Supreme Court. 'He was appointed Chief Justice of India in 1956.

Now he is the Vice-Chancellor of Visva-Bharati.

B. B. Borkar

Chairman, "Tagore Literature" Section.

Borkar is among the poets and writers who used their talent for the cause of freedom. Born in Goa 50 years ago, he taught in school for 16 years from 1930 to 1946 in which year he gave up his job to participate in the Goa freedom movement. As a political worker he edited three periodicals championing the cause of freedom from Portuguese rule. For six years from 1948 he worked as a journalist and gained prominence as an author in Konkani and Marathi. Six of his latest books were published on his fiftieth birthday recently. He novel, Temple Girl, has been translated into three Indian languages.

Leonard K. Elmhirst

Chairman, "Rural Reconstruction" Section.

Mr. Elmhirst, who first came out to India in 1915 and

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worked as a Government official for one year, was associated with Rabindranath Tagore in the starting of the rural reconstruction programme at Sriniketan. He travelled with the poet as his private secretary when he visited China, Japan, Argentina and Italy in 1924-25. He married Mrs. Willard Straight, who financed the Sriniketan enterprise from 1921 till the independence of India, and the couple started a "Sriniketan" in England—Dartington Hall Enterprise—which combined forestry, farming, industry and an arts centre.

In 1944, when Mr. R. G. Casey was the Governor of Bengal, he appointed Mr. Elmhirst as Agricultural Adviser, I that capacity, Mr. Elmhirst drafted the first plan for a Damodar Valley Department in collaboration with Professor Saha and Dr. Sudhir Sen, Mr. Elmhirst was a member of the Government of India's Commission on Higher Education in Rural India.

Dr. Mulk Raj Anand

Chairman, "Tagore Paintings" Section is a celebrated author, critic and editor.

Soumyendranath Tagore

Soumyendranath Tagore's antecedents,—his birth in an illustrious family, his education in the background of a period that was in political ferment and his eight years' stay in the European countries, particularly the last two years in Moscow, are in a large measure responsible for his colourful socio-political activities and his literary contributions. His founding of the Revolutionary Communist Party of India in 1934, his unceasing struggle for Indian Independence and his periodic incarerations—all correspond to and flow from this background. Among his literary works are, a volume of poems in Bengali, translated from original Russian, books on songs of Rabindranath Tagore, and on Saratchandra Chatterji. He also wrote an interesting book on 'place of flowers in works of Kalidasa'.

Dr. Heinz Mode.

Dr. Heinz Mode, a well-known Indologist, is a Professor

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of Oriental Archaeology and Director of the Institute of Archaeology, Martin Luther University at Halle, East Germany. An authority on Indian pre-history, Dr. Mode has devoted to India and Ceylon where he has lived and studied for many years. An erudite scholar in Ethnology, Folk lore, Art, History and Archaeology, Dr. Mode looks upon Santiniketan as his spiritual home where he has studied for sometime when Tagore was living, the essence of common brotherhook and international friendship. Dr. Heinz Mode is a member of the Tagore Committee of the German Democratic Republic and of the Society of Cultural Relations with foreign countries.

Albert William Trueman.

Mr. Trueman is the Director of The Canada Council for the Encouragement of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. Obtaining doctorates in literature and law, he began as the headmaster of the academic department of Stanstead Wesleyan College in 1927. Eight years later, he headed the Department of English in Mount Allison University. In 1945, he was appointed President of Manitoba University and in 1948 President of the University of New Brunswick. From 1953 to 1957, he was the Government Film Commissioner and Chairman of the National Film Board of Canada. He is a member of the Canadian Association for Adult Education, Canadian Writers Foundation, Dominion Drama Festival, Humanities Association and a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, London.

Juan Perez Creus.

Juan Perez Creus is considered the best Spanish poet of humar today. As a professor—he is a Ph.D. and D. Litt.—he was interested in children and wrote two books on them in French, *The Education of Abnormal Children* and *The Glossic Interest in Children.* The books, published in Switzerland, were later translated by him into Spanish. He has several poetic publications to his credit. At present Juan Perez Crues is in New Delhi as the correspondent of

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Afan, Mundo and the news agency Pyresa. He is writing a poem on Yamuna.

Martin Carroll.

Dr. Martin Carroll has made a special study of comparative English literature in countries in which it is vernacular or a living second language. This summer, at the University of Hawaii, he give a series of 30 lectures on Indian literature in English. Ten of those lectures were on Rabindranath Tagore.

After taking post-graduate degrees from Fordham University, New York, the University of Iowa City and Gregorian University, Rome, Dr. Carroll worked as a research fellow at Fordham University, the University of Western Austratian, Perth, on a Fulbright grant and at the Austratian National University Canberra, under the auspices of the University of lowa and Rockefeller Foundation.

Manoje Basu

Manoje Basu is a prolific and popular writer of Bengal today. He has written a large number of best-seller novels, short stories, travelogues, and also dramas for the stage. Early in his literary career he had also written good poetry which attracted considerable attention.

Shri Basu worked a school teacher for a long time. With the publication of his *Manush Garar Karigar, Bagh,* and *Nutan* Manush he was catapulted into fame and the resultant lucrative benefits. Being a traveller by temperament, he toured various places of Bengal even in the days of his extreme poverty. Later on he visited Ceylon, China, Russia and the Central Asian countries and almost all parts of Europe. He is the recipient of the Narsingdas Prize (Delhi University) for his travellogue, *Chin Dekhe Elam.* Last year (1960) the Calcutta University awarded him the Saratchandra Chatterji Memorial Prize and Medal as the "best writer of Bengali fiction published within the last three years".

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